

# The Book of The Pigeon



By

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*(Member of the American Pigeon Club, National  
Pigeon Association, American Avicultural  
Society, British Avicultural  
Society, etc.)*

ILLUSTRATED

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## *Foreword*

WHAT POSSIBLE MOTIVE CAN A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, ESPECIALLY one engaged in the teaching of English, have for writing a pigeon book? Desire for prestige? Hardly, since the subject of the book has no bearing on his professional work. Monetary returns? Long before I began actual work on the manuscript, a prominent fancier forewarned me: "Don't you know that no pigeon book has ever become a best seller?" But my greatest encouragement came from a generous old-timer in the East, who wrote in part: "Most of your effort and time will be thrown away. I have never yet seen a pigeon book that paid for its printing and effort. . . . With me pigeons must pay their way or I am out of pigeons, as I have a family and over five hundred fancy pigeons of all kinds to support. . . . I have seen many start pigeon books but precious few finish them. However, let me know how you progress and if you get stuck, I might help you!"

Pigeons have been my passion for forty years. My Father is responsible for it all. I have kept every kind almost from ordinary scrub homers and European field pigeons to choice Nuns, Magpies, Trumpeters, Strassers, Larks, Racing Homers, Pigmy and English Pouters, and, of course, the indispensable Kings and Carneaux—not for just a few weeks, but for months and years; long enough, in other words, to learn to know my birds well. So quite naturally I love pigeons. They are simply an essential part of my life and always will be. And that, in short, explains the reason for this book.

"The Book of the Pigeon" is meant to be neither an exhaustive nor a scientific treatise of the subject, but mainly an informal and informative chronicle of my experiences with pigeons. If some of my observations do not agree with yours, please keep in mind the fact that each pigeon has its own more or less distinctive characteristics, which set it off from all others

of its kind. Moreover, in all probability you keep your birds much differently from the way in which I keep mine, and such differences greatly affect the birds' behavior. But whether you have kept pigeons for many years or not at all, this little book is intended to stimulate your interest in them.

In gathering data on and pictures of fancy and commercial breeds, I have had the intelligent and enthusiastic co-operation of many broadminded fanciers. Only lack of space prevents me from mentioning each one separately. However, I am glad of this opportunity to thank all those fanciers again for their timely kindness. With but few exceptions, the hundreds of letters which I have received from fanciers near and far have made my whole task more pleasant.

In presenting pictures of the various breeds, my aim has been to give the reader as clear and interesting a likeness of as fine a specimen as possible. In some cases pictures obtained from American fanciers, while highly desirable in some respects, proved unsuitable for purposes of reproduction. This predicament—and it was a real one—finally prompted me to seek the aid of fanciers and photographers in England and Germany, who, I am happy to say, helped me very much in securing the needed photographs.

For reading various portions of the manuscript and for making many helpful suggestions, I owe special thanks to my wife; to my friends Dr. George Francis Richardson and Mr. A. J. Knorr, and to Mr. Fred Thompson. I am indebted to Mr. Frank H. Hollmann, Publisher of the "American Pigeon Journal" for supplying me with a number of photographs of American pigeons; to Mr. H. G. Parkinson, Publisher of "Pigeons," for helping me procure pictures of English pigeons; and to my sister Else for similar aid in securing pictures of German pigeons. My indebtedness to my friend Charles Neidhardt I acknowledge gladly.

CARL NAETHER

*Van Nuys, California,  
July 1937*



## *Preface to Third Edition*

IT IS A PLEASURE INDEED TO PRESENT THIS NEW EDITION OF "The Book of the Pigeon" in response to a steady and very heartening demand from fellow fanciers far and near. Since racing fanciers particularly have manifested such an increasing interest in the first two editions of this little book, it has been deemed advisable to add a *third* chapter dealing with the sport of flying homers. Moreover, in answer to numerous requests from beginning hobbyists for information concerning the proper housing of their birds, a new chapter on this subject, with many illustrations of lofts in actual and efficient operation, has been incorporated in the present edition. Other, minor additions and corrections have likewise been made.

The generous co-operation of fanciers throughout the country in furnishing suitable photographs of their birds and their lofts has greatly benefited this edition, which, it is hoped, will contribute even more than have editions one and two, to making pigeon-keeping a truly fascinating pastime.

The author takes this opportunity once again to express his cordial appreciation to all those fanciers who by contributing photographs and by writing letters of inquiry and of comment have materially assisted him in making this third edition attractive and comprehensive.

CARL NAETHER

*Sherman Oaks, California*  
*July 1944*

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MR. SCHILLING: Oriental Frill: Black Laced Satinette.

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MR. ROY PAYNE: Dragoon; Pigmy Pouter.

MR. H. O. KEESLING: Modena.

MR. A. MENZE: English Pouter.

MR. GEORGE NEUERBURG: Show Homer, Mealy Show Homer Hen.

MR. A. W. DECLUTE: Flying Tippler.

MR. RAY E. GILBERT: Parlor Tumbler.

MR. K. R. BAXTER: Muffed Tumbler.

MR. N. E. BROOKS: Magpie.

*The following photographs were taken by the author:* Ringneck Dove; Australian Bronze-Wing Pigeons; Male Australian Bronze-Wing Pigeon; Galapagos Doves; Cape Dove Nest.

MUSTO, LEXTONSTONE, ENGLAND: "Little Hope"; "Red Mac"; "True Blue"; "Weston Lad"; Scene at racing pigeon show in Bloomsbury; Blue-Laced Satinette; Blue Frillback; Swallow; Damascene; Exhibition Homer.

NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY: White-throated pigeon; Malayan

Pink-necked fruit pigeon; Sunda Island fruit pigeon; Muller's fruit pigeon; Lesser thick-billed fruit pigeon; Golden-headed fruit pigeon; Orange naped fruit-pigeon.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Till Death Do Part?*

THE STATEMENT HEARD FREQUENTLY THAT PIGEONS MATE for life is intended to imply that sexually they are faithful to their chosen partners. It is true that once properly paired, pigeons are likely to keep their mates for several years, even the duration of their lives. A mated pair will complete the cycle of building nest, laying eggs, and rearing young many times during the year. Each bird will assume its share of the work required to keep the eggs warm and the young fed. This mutual activity does not imply, however, that the birds are necessarily faithful to each other in their marital relationship. Any careful observer of pigeons knows that infidelity is perhaps as common among them as it is amongst other so-called monogamous birds.

In all probability, domestication of the pigeon, which began prior to 1600, with its consequent confinement of large numbers in relatively small space is to no small extent responsible for the tendency of the pigeon to indulge in extra-marital affairs. Such indulgence is more or less instinctive and not confined to domestic pigeons. Wild pigeons and doves brought into this country, such as African Triangular Spotted Pigeons, Indian Greenwings, Mexican Ground Doves, and other varieties, show so much more jealousy during the breeding season than do most domesticated varieties that they cannot be bred successfully in as close confinement as can domestic pigeons. This pronounced jealousy would indicate that they are accustomed to nesting by themselves, congregating in flocks only when the nesting season is over. Having comparatively little opportunity to mingle freely with others of their kind during the breeding season, most wild pigeons and doves cannot help being more faithful to their mates than most of our domesticated varieties.

Whether among domestic pigeons the male or the female is more inclined to infidelity is difficult to say, though it would

seem to be the former, he being usually the one to initiate breeding activities. In the bird world it is commonly the male that boasts a colorful plumage or that sings enticingly, especially at mating time. Usually the female lacks beauty of feather, and she has no song to speak of. The domestic pigeon has for centuries been bred for certain colors so that males and females of many varieties look exactly alike. However, the male is usually recognizable by the tactics he exhibits at mating time. Moreover, he is usually somewhat larger than the female and he has a thicker neck. Most characteristic of his sex is his frequent and sustained cooing at other birds, during which he will turn around completely as if dancing, a behavior not found in female pigeons.

Careful observation of individual pigeons for some time will usually lead to the discovery that there is as much fidelity and infidelity among them as among the common run of human beings. Since the female pigeon not only lays the eggs but incubates them from approximately four in the afternoon until ten the following morning, she assumes the greater burden of work, and has consequently comparatively little time left for philandering. During the hours that she is off the nest, she is subjected to the persistent attention of those males which have no mates or which do not happen to be incubating. If their number is large and the loft small so that Mrs. Pigeon has nowhere to escape, she may succumb to the impertinent advances of some husky and loud-voiced male. Of course, she can always fly to her nest-box for safety, which is something she will do only as a last resort.

When female pigeons have indulged in serious flirtation, the effects are usually noticeable in the changed color, size, or shape of their young, where several varieties of pigeons are kept in the same enclosure, for most varieties will readily intermate. But even the fancier who keeps each variety in a separate pen sometimes wonders why a certain pair of prize-winners produces disappointing offspring when continued observation might disclose a philandering female. To insure true breeding in such cases he must either break the pair up and replace the female with a faithful one, or else he must isolate the pair. Among wild pigeons and doves, females are much less exposed to the temptations just mentioned, since in the natural state a mated pair will not tolerate rivals in its par-

ticular nesting area. Furthermore, the ever-present necessity of foraging for food for herself and her young leaves the female wild pigeon practically no time for engaging in affairs with other males.

While their mates are on the nests, some male pigeons will spend a large portion of their time making love to any females which they happen to find in the loft. Having met them time and time again, they sight them quickly and greet them with joyous coos as if they were old friends. If a female remains coy or dares to peck her pestiferous admirer, he will soon drive her from place to place, prancing and cooing with great animation. If she is mated, having perhaps eggs or young, she will after a time escape his attentions by flying to her nest-box, which to him is forbidden territory. If, on the other hand, she is unattached and in mating mood or inclined to philander, she may lead him on a merry flight from one place to another, finally yielding to his ardent love-making. Even though a female sitting on the nest may actually see her mate flirt, she will usually remain at her post. However, if the rival should have the effrontery to come near it, she will charge her with all the fury of which a jealous female pigeon is capable and drive her off in short order.

Polygamous tendencies among pigeons are by no means rare. Only recently I learned of a White King male who had three wives so to speak, the youngsters of which he helped to feed. If a male pigeon has succeeded in seducing the mate of another, which at times is only a matter of minutes, and if the offended male has seen the *tête-à-tête*, he, jealous and fighting mad, will try to separate the philanderers and drive his mate home at once. Sometimes he will engage the interloper in combat on the spot and continue to battle him for a time each day until one of them gets the upper hand. If the rivals are fairly well matched, the battle often ends in a draw and is likely to be renewed at the first opportunity.

Pairing of males or of females is not at all uncommon among pigeons. It happens frequently among females which are kept by themselves. Many breeders separate the sexes during the winter in order to give the flock a few months' rest. Almost invariably there will be some females consorting with others, building nests, each pair laying four eggs, which of course do not hatch. As time goes on, the behavior of one of



them will become somewhat more masculine, though she will usually continue to lay eggs. Both birds will take turns at incubating just as if they were a true pair. The less feminine female will often exhibit a certain masculinity—in cooing more loudly and frequently than usual and in fighting intruders more viciously. If two such females are not separated, they will continue to live together for many months, laying eggs and sitting in useless incubation, for they have no intelligence which tells them that the eggs are not fertile. If they are given fertile eggs, they will hatch and raise the young exactly as if they were their own.

Pairing among male pigeons is somewhat less common. It is usually practised by young birds—nest mates that have become so attached to each other that they will not be separated. I recall a pair of young English pouters—the clowns of pigeon-dom who inflate their crops to the size of small toyballoons. I gave them the freedom of a spacious yard where they could mingle with tumblers, homers, and larks. However, the pouters, apparently not accustomed to other varieties, stayed largely by themselves. It was but a few months before I saw one of them—they were both alike in color and size—very awkwardly carry twigs and straws to their nesting place, while the other was in the box arranging them and cooing softly. The nest was finished before the week was up. Then to my surprise both pouters crowded onto it and sat simultaneously day after day. Though puzzled by this curious behavior, I confidently waited for the eggs to appear, an event which failed to take place since, as I discovered shortly afterwards, both birds were males. They were a very devoted “pair,” billing and cooing a large part of the time. Perhaps you think the futile nesting taught them the folly of repeating the experiment. But no! Having found a more suitable nesting site in a large, half-dark nest-box hung under the sharply projecting roof of an old out-house, these young male pouters proceeded to build a second nest. In neatness it was superior to most pigeons’ nests, which are haphazard structures consisting of a few twigs carelessly thrown together. Again the pouters began to sit, usually both at the same time. When after seven or eight days no eggs appeared, the birds left the nest. What next? I thought. A few days later I was startled to see them fighting viciously, the one trying his best to oust the

other from the nest-box. Day by day the strife grew hotter. It ended finally when the stronger brother—or perhaps the more persistent—managed to push the other out of the box. The loser had to seek a roosting place elsewhere. Oddly enough, the victor made no effort to look for a mate among the other pigeons, with which he would mingle only at feeding times. He wanted to have nothing to do with them and continued to live alone like a bachelor who is sour on the world in general. If I had not forced a mate on him—by cooping him up with her in his nest-box for a time—he might have continued his lonely bachelorhood for many months.

Sex in pigeons is not an absolute but a relative matter. All one can say is that a certain pigeon shows predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine characteristics in its behavior. Thus we find that a highly feminine female will quite readily pair with a masculine (usually more aggressive) female, or that a feminine male will become the mate of a less feminine male. Moreover, a pigeon which proves predominantly masculine in one mating may prove predominantly feminine when paired with a highly masculine female. In such a mating both birds may act like females at first. Then follows a struggle for supremacy which is won by the more masculine bird.

An instance of extreme tendency to promiscuousness is furnished by a male Australian Plumed Dove which I purchased from a man who had raised this rather rare dove by hand. This bird knows no fear whatsoever. The moment a person enters the aviary in which he is kept, he will come running—Plumed doves are essentially ground doves—to meet the visitor and to peck vigorously at his shoes and trousers. All the while he will be cooing as if he were displeased with something. He regards every person entering the aviary as his prospective mate, and bowing before him will spread his wings and tail to display the rich cinnamon fawn which gives this bird so striking an appearance. Nor is this singular behavior peculiar to this bird. Other males of this variety hand-raised by the same fancier act in very much the same way toward their keepers, while the females show no such promiscuous tendencies.

It may be affirmed without exaggeration that the tendency toward promiscuity exists among all pigeons, but especially

among those forced to breed under highly artificial conditions. Abnormal sex behavior may be readily induced by isolating males or females for shorter or longer periods of time in enclosures in which they can neither see nor hear members of the opposite sex. We know that in large flocks of pigeons, especially those having unmated birds, irregular pairings are a common occurrence. As a matter of fact, the fidelity of pigeons, so universally proclaimed, is largely, if not wholly, the direct result of their being occupied with nest building, incubating of eggs, and feeding of youngsters. When pigeons are idle for any length of time, they soon attempt all sorts of improper alliances. A pigeon staying with the same mate for a long time does so not necessarily because she wants to, but because of circumstances over which she exercises little or no control. Ordinarily the breeding cycles follow one another in such rapid succession as to leave her no time for irregular love affairs; and when she is at leisure, she may not be in the mood for philandering.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *The Iron in the Velvet*

**B**ECAUSE PIGEONS ENJOY LIVING TOGETHER IN FLOCKS, MANY people link this sociability with a certain gentleness and a disinclination to quarrel and fight. But like many popular sayings the phrase "gentle as a dove" contains but little truth. Reasonably close observation of pigeons or doves (pigeons are merely the larger kinds of doves, especially the domesticated varieties) establishes the fallacy of this statement. As a matter of fact, pigeons are usually not only not gentle, they are often pugnacious in the extreme.

This morning I stretched my hand deliberately toward two Bronzewing pigeons hatched only a week ago in a nest built in an old hanging flower-basket. Among the thirty odd varieties of pigeons and doves it has been my joy to keep since boyhood, the Australian Bronzewing pigeon is perhaps the least inclined to fight. Yet its week-old offspring, still naked, their crops round and protruding, suddenly roused themselves out of their comfortable lethargy to peck vigorously at my hand with their dark, broad bills, which in size seem out of all proportion to their heads and bodies. As I was watching the plump and rather ugly little birds, whose wing feathers at maturity will be tarnished with blue, copper, and gold in the light of the sun, a black beetle came crawling along the nest's uneven edge. The four-footed intruder did not get far. The moment that the larger one of the squabs—it had hatched a day before its nest-mate—espied the strange moving thing, it hacked it in two. At my raised hand the two nestlings puffed and bristled, finally raising their flabby selves an inch or two off the nest; then they struck vigorously in the direction of my hand.

But that, you interpose, is largely defensive action. And yet it is this instinctive exercise of self-protection by the nestling which with more and more experience develops into a stubborn pugnacity. Apropos of this matter I witnessed a rare

sight not long ago. A pair of homing pigeons, only a little over four weeks old, flapped their stout but untried wings into the face of their father who tried unceremoniously to evict them from the nest so that he and his mate might use it for another brood. The youngsters' entirely unexpected behavior so nonplussed their bright-eyed parent that he retreated, evidently to ponder the next move. But apparently he knew of no other, more fatherly way to get his children out of the house. Again and again he squeezed himself into the nest-box, jostling his offspring, the while cooing angrily as if to say, "You've been at home long enough. Now you're grown up. Get out!" But the children were of another mind. Peeping most anxiously and flapping their wings in stout-hearted resistance they convinced their exhausted parent how wrong he was in trying to evict them. For suddenly he flew over to another nest-box, and with much insistent cooing, which could be heard plainly all over the yard, he began to coax the mother of his home-loving youngsters into it and so induce her to relinquish all thought of using the old home over again at that time.

The tendency to fight, which in young pigeons manifests itself largely in defensive actions, is the concomitant of the instinct to breed. It is displayed first of all in an endeavor to win a mate, then a nesting site. Once the male pigeon has achieved these supreme life objectives, he fights to retain possession of them as long as he possibly can.

Imagine for a moment an unattached male pigeon living with a large flock. In spring the advent of warm weather rouses his reproductive proclivities. No longer does he need much food just to keep alive. Now there's energy to spare. Nature's doings. Past is the period of winter lethargy. He preens his feathers oftener and seemingly with more care than before. He mingles more intimately with the flock, approaching this member and that to learn which is male, which female. Soon he comes to know that if his approach is met with determined resistance, frequently accompanied by threatening coos and swift, sudden thrusts of wing, he is facing one of his own sex, whereas if he meets with a tendency to peck lightly and to retreat, then he is facing the opposite, the desirable, sex. Though pigeons, like most birds, possess extremely sharp eyesight and though the females are usually smaller than the males, they cannot distinguish sex by sight. Their

way is through actual approach, laborious to be sure and frequently fraught with a certain danger, but after all quite reliable.

So our male pigeon introduces himself time and again to the members of the flock. Repeated rebuffs and flaps in the face soon tell him which males to avoid because of their superior strength and fighting tactics, for the law of the strong operates with almost unfailing certainty in pigeondom. Likewise, repeated greetings of his approach with nonchalant disdain, mild pecking, and a disposition to back away will prompt him to press the acquaintance further. Not knowing, of course, which of the females are eligible and unpaired, he courts more insistently with much cooing and dances graceful attendance until perchance he is interrupted by mylady's mate who at once challenges the philanderer to combat. Often the bachelor's adversaries content themselves with driving their mates out of his perfidious presence and into their nest-boxes. Woe unto him if he dares to follow to that sacred place.

At mating time pigeons take possession of an area surrounding the nesting site. It is a habit belonging to birds in general. Only a few days ago I saw a male blackbird dash madly after a mockingbird that had ventured into the other's home precinct. Feathers flew amidst screeching and pecking. The spirited chase lasted but a few minutes, with the blackbird in close pursuit of the saucy intruder who soon vanished into a pepper tree. Among wild pigeons the radius of this nesting terrain, in which usually only members of the family, excepting perhaps full-grown youngsters, are tolerated, extends farther than that of their domesticated brothers, which usually kept in none-too-large wire enclosures must share their quarters with many others of their kind. Nevertheless even in cramped quarters the domesticated pigeon will insist on having a definite nesting area of its own. It wants some privacy. To satisfy this longing for an undisturbed nesting, male pigeons put up savage fights, frequently terminated only by the combatants' exhaustion.

Take again the case of the bachelor pigeon cited above. If in his long and persistent search for a mate, he does not chance upon an unattached female, he will try to lure a female away from her mate. Naturally, such despicable behavior arouses the latter's jealousy to a high pitch, resulting in clashes which may

occur daily for some weeks. If the philanderer happens to be a large, strong bird, one with an especially loud voice, he may succeed in realizing his adulterous ambitions.

Healthy male pigeons are extremely jealous of their mates and nesting sites, to defend which they will sacrifice their last ounce of energy. Moreover, they are very garrulous fighters that villify their antagonists with a continuous barrage of oft-repeated notes, which are further emphasized by sharp claps of wings and sudden thrusts at the adversary. If the combat concerns the possession of an already occupied nesting place, then both male and female will usually repel the undesirable outsider. In such a fight, which is often waged within the limited confines of a small box, it is amusing to see the female rush sometimes at her mate and sometimes at the common enemy. The battle is so heated, the action so rapid and confusing that the combatants have no time to make sure they are locking beaks with the enemy. If the birds are fairly evenly matched, the strife may continue for days. The deadly hate which springs up between males fighting for mate or home, or both, is maintained at a high pitch as long as they live in close proximity. Rivals recognize each other quickly, especially by the tone of voice, for no two pigeons coo exactly alike. Such recognition instantly arouses jealousy to fighting heat.

Once a male pigeon has been decisively beaten, he will then usually go out of the victor's way. Ordinarily physical strength and experience in fighting triumph. The larger male vanquishes the smaller; the stronger, the weaker; the experienced bird, the inexperienced.

In most flocks of pigeons there is at least one bully. His peculiar pastime may be to drive other pigeons from the feeding trough in order that he may still his hunger first. In lofts equipped with but one small main entrance for the birds, the bully will stand in front of it for hours, seemingly inert like a drowsy guard. However, the moment another pigeon alights near him, he will rush it most unceremoniously off the alighting board or else pursue it hotly through the entrance. Usually the bully takes possession of a number of nest-boxes in the loft, daring any other pigeon to come within considerable radius. His ubiquitous presence in the loft, heralded by boisterous cooing, may so impress a female that she will desert

her mate and pair with him. I have seen such bullies destroy other pigeons' nests and peck their young to death to gain possession of a coveted nesting place.

When a male pigeon sees another strutting and making advances to his mate, he seems to interpret the other's intentions readily. In a flash he will be at his mate's side to fight the interloper off. In doing so he is guided entirely by feelings of jealousy. He is anxious to prevent his mate from engaging in any active flirtation and will, if need be, interrupt his duties of incubation—he sits on the nest from ten A.M. until about four P.M. every day—to remind the offender as well as his mate most forcibly of his prerogatives.

A female pigeon is much less inclined to fight than a male. She practically never takes the offensive or purposely seeks quarrels as does the male. Whatever battles she takes part in are almost always fought in defense of her eggs or her young, and though she will stand her ground valiently in such emergencies, she is no match for any intruder because she lacks stamina and experience in fighting. She is, in fact, very clumsy at it. If the adversary strikes her a few hard blows, she retreats without much hesitation. Of course, there are females exceptionally loyal to their mates and their offspring who will fight for days before giving up either. Such birds are extremely jealous of any unattached female or females to which their mates may have taken a fancy and will pursue these interfering spinsters relentlessly throughout the loft. They recognize the hated rivals at considerable distance and chase them continually.

Not long ago I watched a female homing pigeon—her mate apparently lost racing in stormy weather—defend her nest and eggs against an ardent wooer. Round and round the two whirled in the nest-box. Finally, the male managed to push the brave mother out of her nest and to keep her out. His vigorous cooing seemed to say, "I'll show you who is lord of this domain now. Unless you calm down and behave yourself, I won't let you come in again." For the greater part of that day the female sat disconsolately in front of the nest-box having to listen to the intruder's persistent love calls. Whenever he came close, she would peck at him as if to reply, "Just wait till my mate comes back. Then you'll get yours!" A few days later, Mrs. Homer accepted the intruder as her new



mate, though, it seemed to me, rather reluctantly. She loved her home. Within a week she was again on eggs. Her new ship of matrimony was sailing quite smoothly when suddenly a most violent storm struck it broadside—her “lost” mate had suddenly returned to the loft. I was overjoyed, for “Redoubtable” was one of the loft’s swiftest racers. Tired and bedraggled, this pigeon flew straight to what he thought was his home still. Here he met the unfaithful mate who greeted him with several short and meaningful coos, as if to apologize, “I just couldn’t help it. He was too much for me.” The moment that “Redoubtable” tried to enter the old familiar nest-box, something struck him a violent blow in the face. Quickly whirling around, he managed to edge his way into the box; then he sailed with all his might into the intruder, who was thoroughly mad at the prospect of being cheated out of a long-wanted mate and home. The battle was on. Seldom have I seen pigeons fight more viciously. Each was so jealous of the other as to want to kill him then and there. Theirs was little difference in size, but the one bird was somewhat weakened from a long race through wind and rain as well as from lack of proper food en route. Round and round the fighters spun, pushing and punching each other countless times. The female sat by silent but alert. Once she darted in between the combatants only to be roughly thrown out by one of them, she knew not which. For a long time the battle continued on even terms. Sometimes one male would be thrust out of the box, sometimes the other. Each time he would again charge the other and the two would exchange blow for blow. After a time their beaks were buried deeply in each other’s soft necks. The fighters were nearing exhaustion. With but slight rest periods, during which they denounced each other’s tactics in terms which only pigeons can understand, they had literally battled for hours. Suddenly their owner’s familiar whistling called them to afternoon food and drink. Reluctantly they obeyed. A few minutes later they renewed their deadly feud. It was late afternoon. Whichever bird occupied the nest-box that night would undoubtedly occupy it on the morrow. It was a most crucial time in the lives of these two male homers. When I re-entered the loft shortly before nightfall, the interloper was sitting outside the nest, occasionally flapping his right wing in the direction of the enemy and cooing a little.

The next morning he was back at his old roosting place, while "Redoubtable" and his mate were billing and cooing preparatory to renewed nest-building activities.

Ordinarily the larger a flock of pigeons is, the more fighting is likely to ensue. Especially is this true if there are unattached females. Their presence is likely to cause the sudden breaking up of many a pigeon's nesting. The same holds true of unattached males. All of which is one reason why pigeon and dove fanciers prefer to have only mated pairs in their lofts. Too well they realize the damage in broken eggs and half-dead young which a single male can cause in a very short while.

Since, as mentioned, pigeons covet for themselves a certain area surrounding their nests, it becomes apparent that the less crowded they are in confinement, the less tempted they will be to fight. That is the reason why a single pair kept by itself has no occasion to fight. Such ideal conditions seldom prevail in nature, though they can often be provided in captivity.

Pigeons learn from experience so that those kept in crowded enclosures, where they are harassed by constant bickering and biting, develop more pugnacious tempers and increased fighting tendencies. Which is the reason why some strains of pigeons are scrappier than others. Undoubtedly male pigeons could be trained to fight just as roosters are trained. The outcome would in most instances be less satisfying to most spectators, however, since few pigeons kill their opponents in battle.

Whatever the true basis for the saying "gentle as a dove" may be, whether it is the bird's sociability or its seeming mild general behavior, there is no basis for such gentleness in fact. The pigeon's disposition to fight rises and falls with its disposition to mate. Since the latter is dependent on climatic conditions, the tendency toward pugnacity is at its low point in winter. Even then, however, many battles are fought in a pigeon loft for the possession of favorite roosting places, for the usual attitude of one pigeon to another, excepting its mate and young, is more or less suspicious and antagonistic.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Billing and Cooing*

THE ADVENT OF WARM WEATHER IN SPRING STIRS LIVING CREATURES to new life. All winter long they have been dull and drowsy, giving Nature ample opportunity to replenish their depleted stores of vital energy. Now that her task is completed, she is calling for renewed activity. Every normal being on the face of the earth welcomes and heeds this call with fresh, vigorous joy. Certainly pigeons are no exception to this elemental rule of life.

There is a vital urge in the bright, warm air of spring that calls pigeons \* and other birds to new life—that draws males and females to one another in anticipation of nesting activities. If you are so fortunate as to be able to observe a pigeon loft, or dovecote as it is sometimes called, at this promising time of year, you will be struck with the liveliness of its occupants. Long before you approach it, you hear the insistent, sometimes rather mournful, cooing of the males. I have heard it in the dead of night. Some of them are calling to their old mates to begin housekeeping anew. Others, old bachelors, persistent and energetic, are trying to entice proud young females into this or that favorite corner or box of the loft in the hope that the latter will find it a suitable home for their youngsters. Nearing the loft, you hear the sharp clapping of strong wings cutting the air in graceful swiftness. Suddenly, as you come in sight of the birds, the commotion dies down. The long-drawn out cooing of the males has changed into a very short, whirring note of fear, into which the females join. It is uttered only when danger lurks—when prowling cats stalk, when birds of prey circle menacingly overhead, when a stranger approaches the loft. Of course, if your pigeons know you well, not merely as their keeper but as their friend, they will not be much disturbed by your appearance, unless it be very sudden, but

\* In warm climates domestic pigeons will breed practically throughout the year.

will perhaps, that is if you have treated them gently, come flying to you with the expectation of getting a bit of feed, for pigeons are sociable creatures that learn to recognize and like their keepers quickly.

As you watch the flock, you are fascinated by the busyness of the clean-feathered, bright-eyed birds. Springtime in a pigeon loft is busy time indeed. Every full-grown male pigeon is on the alert to find a mate. For days he goes courting, cooing, and dancing before many birds in the hope of chancing upon an unattached female that will join him in housekeeping. Since he cannot tell the sex of other pigeons on sight, he must through trial and error find out which birds are likely to resist his advances with cooing and fighting—males like himself—and which birds will only peck at him indifferently and edge away as if afraid—the females, or sometimes youngsters of either sex. If the courting male has been with a certain flock for several months, he will know the males from the females by sight, having literally run into them time after time—heard their threatening voices and felt their sharp beaks and strong wings. But his only way to get thoroughly well acquainted with strange members of the flock is to run up to them with loud and repeated cooing and thus to test the particular nature of their resistance.

You will agree that our courting male is bound to make many a serious blunder before he chances upon a female that will tolerate his eager presence. Not only will he be sharply repulsed by many males who resent his courting approach, but there will be many a female that, being already paired, will have nothing to do with him. However, the mating instinct strives so persistently for outward expression as to prompt the bachelor to continue to approach the females with much persuasive cooing and "dancing," during which he spreads and scrapes his tail proudly. At times he will let the desired one walk off a short distance only to catch up with her by means of a pretty little flight executed with loud-clapping wings.

Like others of his kind, he is not overly particular as to which female is likely to become his mate, though he may prefer one with a plumage of the color of his own. What I mean is that he is likely to pair with the first female that is strongly impressed by his wooing, regardless of whether or not she happens to be the mate of another, or even his own

mother, sister, or daughter. Moreover, in his deep anxiety to mate, he will pay little attention to the color or shape of his future mate, pairing, if need be, with a female of a variety wholly different from his own. The only law he knows is that of nature, which urges him to find a mate, to build a nest, and to raise youngsters. These elemental functions he will do his utmost to perform, having only the instinct of his race and the memory of long experience to guide him. Which is the reason why he goes about so many things blindly and stupidly. He does not know why, he only knows *that* he wants to mate. A something irresistible within urges him to find a female. If there happen to be a number of unattached females in the loft and but few suitors, then the loud cooing of our bachelor is likely to attract several females who may follow him to his nesting place where the strongest or else the most persistent of these followers will ultimately prevail.

The pairing of domestic pigeons is evidenced by frequent billing and love-making in general. Billing is a sure sign of mating. Ordinarily it does not occur between unmated birds which happen to have taken a fancy to each other. The female inserts her beak into the open beak of the male who regurgitates small amounts of food. That the female relishes this partly digested food very much is shown by the fact that she will reach again and again for the male's beak in the hope of getting more.\* The act of billing is usually followed by mating: the male treads the slightly squatting female. If the birds are very much excited, it frequently happens that immediately following the sexual act, the female will mount the male who squats to invite this attention. Some females are often so eager for sexual union as to squat readily before any male that persists in forcing his attention on them.

Following the mating ceremony, the male will, seemingly without regard for direction, indulge in a short flight and circle over the loft joyously. Judged by the loud clapping of his wings and the leisurely yet swift way in which he suddenly falls and rises through the air, he seems immensely to enjoy this aerial play which ends soon after it has begun. Usually he drops down to the loft first and is shortly followed by his mate—she joined him in the nuptial flight—whom he greets with

\* Among some wild pigeons, notably the Australian Crested and the Bronzewing pigeons, I have observed no billing whatever.

lively cooing and dancing as if he had not seen her for a long while. This lovers' flight is a fascinating sight to watch, especially if the birds are not confined.

Before, or soon after, pairing, the male pigeon finds a suitable nesting place. In a crowded loft he has frequently to battle for days for the possession of it. Having a strong attachment to his nesting site and its immediate surroundings—his territory proper—he is ever ready to defend his right of ownership with every ounce of energy at his command. It is to this place that he induces his new mate to come and settle down. Any hesitation on her part he tries to overcome with soothing and very persistent cooing which may, with some interruptions, continue for days. I vividly recall a beautiful, blue-barred homer who, not able to find a mate at home, paired with a female from a neighboring loft a quarter of a mile down the street. Apparently disturbed by the unfamiliarity of the new surroundings, his newly won bride flew with him to the roof of the two-story house, the small backyard of which constituted his territory. Seemingly pleased to have enticed his mate this far from her beloved loft, the male flew straight to his precious home—a box nailed against the wall of an outhouse and hidden in the cool branches of an immense linden tree. Confidently he called to her, "Come, Come, Come!" Still shy, and not knowing or seeing the exact location of her new mate's home, she flew down from the roof and under the immense tree. For a moment or two she perched nervously at the entrance to the box; then, frightened by a man who happened to be in the yard, she flew swiftly back to the roof. Though the male kept on calling her most insistently for a quarter of an hour, she would not again come down from the roof and finally winged her way back to the old home. Suspicious of her long absence, the male came out of his box and, not seeing her, flew in the direction of her loft. Despite several days' persistent effort he was not able to induce the other to accept the strange loft and surroundings as her own. When shortly after, I did not see him at his customary roosting place at night, I suspected that he had deserted me for good. To make sure of his whereabouts, I called at the neighbor's and quickly spotted my large, blue-barred homer among the flock. That evening the neighbor caught both birds for me, returning the one and selling the other. I penned the pair up until their first young

were hatched, after which time both stayed readily on the place, raising many a pair of promising youngsters.

But to return to our main topic. A few days after pairing and before the actual nest-building begins, you will see both pigeons in the nest-box, the male inside cooing insistently, the female proudly rushing in at him as if to show her appreciation of the fortunate turn of affairs. Then the two will sit in the box close together, the male frequently pecking gently at his mate, the while cooing contentedly. Thus, with rare exceptions it is the male that selects the nest-site, for the possession of which in a crowded loft he has to fight valiantly.

Actual nest building begins usually within a week after the birds have mated and are settled. Most pigeons and doves are notably poor nest builders, being satisfied with loose and low structures made of twigs, pine needles, straws, and the like. They make no effort whatever to line the inside of the nest with moss, feathers, or other soft material. On rare occasions one will find a pair of pigeons building a very neat nest, piling twigs from six to eight inches high.

It would be highly presumptuous to say that a pigeon builds nest with any conscious intelligence of wanting to provide a soft place for easily broken eggs or a warm place for tiny, naked, and blind young. A nest is a matter of immediate comfort and convenience with most birds. A pigeon is not accustomed to sitting on a flat, even surface, such as the bottom of a wooden box, on which it would be difficult to hold the oval-shaped eggs in place. So she makes a rounded mold out of twigs just deep enough for her to sit in it comfortably. If you have seen a pigeon build nest, you will have noticed how the female, sitting in the center of this mold, arranges the twigs which her mate brings, roundabout her and how occasionally she turns and twists this way and that to give the loose structure the needed shape.

It is at this time—before the eggs are laid—that the male pigeon is extremely jealous of his mate and that he forces her impatiently from place to place, frequently pecking at her, hardly giving her time to eat or drink. This is commonly called *driving*—the male making every effort to compel his mate to go to the nest. Driving stops as soon as the nest is complete and the first egg dropped. Sometimes the male drives his mate to exhaustion, in which case he must be removed for a time in

order to give her rest and opportunity to get food and drink.

The actual process of building the nest lasts several days. The male gets the twigs, one at a time, usually rejecting many before he finds one to his liking. Other birds, such as finches, sparrows, or canaries, will carry a whole beakful of hair or other nesting material at one time, and if perchance they should drop a large portion of it en route, they will at once fly back to retrieve the lost. Not so the pigeon, which takes but one little stick or straw at a time, thus having to make innumerable trips to the nest. Moreover, if by accident the pigeon should drop a straw, he will not catch it in midair or retrieve it on the ground, but will search for another piece. In hunting for nesting material, the pigeon tests the thickness of each twig by taking it in its beak, but not the length, so that he will frequently pick up long twigs, and carry them horizontally, only to find on arrival at the nest that he cannot get them through the opening of the box. I have seen pigeons pull on such pieces for many minutes in an effort to squeeze them through, but their work was usually of no avail. Domestic pigeons are given tobacco stems or pine needles with which to build nest. The strong odor of such material repels lice and other vermin likely to attack old and young birds. If straw is used for nesting material, many fanciers will sprinkle the nest with insect powder. An industrious male will carry a good deal of material to the nest in a short time, where he lays it in front of or sometimes ~~on~~ the neck or back of his mate, who in turn picks it up and arranges it suitably. Not infrequently the male continues to gather nesting material after the first egg is laid, which usually occurs late in the afternoon. After a day's interval, the second egg is dropped and incubation begins in earnest, the male sitting during the day and the female during the night, that is from four in the afternoon until approximately ten in the forenoon. It is interesting to note at this point that certain large varieties of foreign pigeons, such as the Wonga-Wonga, the Victoria Crowned, the Band-tailed, and certain fruit pigeons lay but one egg, whereas all domestic pigeons as well as ringneck, mourning, and most medium-sized and small doves lay two eggs.

The duration of incubation varies: for the passenger pigeon it is but twelve days, for the ringneck dove fourteen to fifteen, and for the common pigeon seventeen to nineteen, depending



largely on the prevailing temperature. Once pigeons or doves are on eggs, they lose much of their usual shyness. I have observed this change in behavior especially in mourning doves which, though usually timid, will not leave the nest at my approach but remain, merely lowering their heads as if to hide, all the while keeping very still. If I wish to examine the contents of their nests—I use mourning doves as foster parents for the young of rare foreign doves—then I have to lift them bodily, as they will not budge an inch. Once lifted off, they will quickly return to the nest, ready to defend it against intruders with vigorous thrusts of beak or wing. Among domestic pigeons it happens occasionally that an extremely shy bird will rush out of the nest immediately a person or animal approaches it, frequently breaking the eggs or dragging a youngster to the ground. Which is one reason why most fanciers treat their birds so that they will be tame when approached and easy to handle.

How either pigeon knows when to relieve its mate from the work of incubation is a question difficult to answer. In all probability, it is guided by some sense of time which in turn is, in my opinion, dependent on the light of day. For many days I had under close observation a pair of charming Cape Doves to determine at what time the male would take up incubation in the morning. On bright, sunny mornings he went to work sometimes as much as an hour earlier than on dull, cloudy ones. Usually he relieved his mate between the hours of eight and half past ten. At first he would sit still for a few moments on the edge of the nest; then he would edge his way slowly into the nest. His mate was usually reluctant to leave, so that at times it was half an hour before the birds had exchanged places. When it was time for the young to hatch, the female refused to leave the nest at all, so that for a few days the male was entirely relieved of incubating. Later this pair of little doves built a nest in a secluded and covered corner of the aviary to which the light penetrated but slowly. In the semi-darkness of this seclusion the male Cape Dove usually did not go on the nest until well after ten o'clock.

Pigeons begin regular incubation usually after the second egg is dropped. No doubt, this regularity accounts for the fact that this egg hatches first. As already mentioned, the birds, especially the female, will often show an increased interest in

their home duties when the time for hatching nears. Then they are reluctant to leave the nest and not easily frightened away. By this time the eggs, which were glossy white when laid, have become a dark or bluish gray, which change of color is proof of their fertility.

During incubation the male of the domestic pigeon will spend his nights sitting near his nest-box, while in the case of wild pigeons and doves the males will sleep a considerable distance away from the nest, presumably so as not to disclose its location to enemies. Before the eggs are deposited, male and female of wild pigeons will roost together; thereafter the male instinctively keeps his distance. Though he may call frequently from the nightly roost, his mate will not answer.

Among domestic pigeons the male sometimes refuses to do his share of incubating, in which case the female will leave the nest after a few days and start another. If the eggs are infertile, the pigeons, not knowing it, will cover them for the usual period, or even a few days longer, just as if they were fertile. Frequently the discomfort caused by accumulated "milk," sometimes called "milk fever," prompts pigeons to leave the eggs; a hen, on the other hand, having nothing to remind her that incubation time is up, will continue to sit on infertile or even china eggs.

Ordinarily the young squab begins to crack the eggshell almost a full day before it emerges. If you hold an egg which shows signs of hatching soon, close to the ear and listen intently, you will hear the sound of gentle hammering coming from within. *Normally the young bird starts his work early in the morning, rests during noon, and resumes his labors in the afternoon.* He will break the shell clear around the large end of the egg. Rarely, if ever, will he hatch late in the afternoon, that is after three or four o'clock. As a matter of fact, he will usually emerge during the morning hours. If the squab is not ready to leave the shell by early afternoon, he will go to sleep and finish his work of hatching early the next morning. In other words, the young pigeon's daily life is subject to cycles very similar to those marking the daily activities of its parents. Early morning is the busiest time, followed by a rest period at noon; in the afternoon comes slightly diminished activity, followed in turn by early retirement. I must not neglect to add at this time that the hatchability of pigeon eggs is measurably

increased by affording the flock ample opportunity for bathing. A pigeon's moist feathers tend to keep the eggshell from becoming so dry and hard that the young squab cannot break it at hatching time. An inexperienced fancier, who came to me for help, lost many young squabs because he thought that like chickens, pigeons bathed in sand, but not in water. For him it was a costly lesson, even though he managed to save a few squabs by helping them out of the eggshell at the proper time.

As soon as the young squabs have hatched, the parents will carry off the empty eggshells, which otherwise might smother the young. Brooding of young is carried on constantly by both parents for a week or ten days following hatching. Many wild pigeons and doves brood their young two and three weeks—in fact, until they are ready to leave the nest. I have observed this especially among Australian Bronzewing and Indian Greenwing pigeons. This brooding goes on even on very hot summer days—to the great discomfort of the youngsters, who edge as far away from the parent as possible. Its purpose is to shield the squabs from the effects of intense sunlight.

Pigeons and doves feed their young with a soft food, popularly called pigeon milk. This whitish, cheese-like substance makes its appearance in the crops of the old birds at the time the young hatch, and it is fed to them for approximately a week. All pigeons feed their offspring by means of regurgitation, pumping so to speak the food out of their crops into those of the youngsters. Later the food consists of small and partially digested grains until finally, when the youngsters' crops have grown larger and tougher, whole grains are fed. In feeding, a domestic pigeon will first fill its crop with various grains such as peas, corn, wheat, and the like; it will then run to the grit box to eat finely crushed rock mixed with some charcoal and salt, which mixture helps to grind the hard grains in the pigeon's stomach; lastly, it will drink copiously in order to soften the whole mixture and thus to make it a complete meal for the young. Both parents take part in feeding. When the young squabs are two or three weeks old, the male parent assumes the larger part of this burden, for by that time their mother is usually busy with another setting of eggs. Ordinarily the squab hatching first gets fed first. Being stronger and growing faster than its mate, it will lift its little head more often to ask for food. Sometimes the difference in size of nest mates

becomes so pronounced that the smaller one is more and more neglected, and finally dies of starvation. This happens quite often among certain foreign doves which when kept in captivity are as a rule not as good feeders as domestic pigeons.

In feeding his young, the old pigeon is guided largely by a desire for comfort. Having filled his crop with more food and water than he normally requires for his own well-being, the bird is anxious to get relief. Thus, he readily, and without thought of discrimination, feeds that youngster first which lifts its beak first, and which in later weeks clamors most vigorously and persistently for attention. It cannot be said therefore that in feeding its youngsters, a pigeon shows conscious preference for this one or that, since he engages in the act only to secure physical relief—to empty an overfull crop. Naturally, if a domestic pigeon has an abundance of food, he will feed his young more because having eaten a good deal, he will be more anxious to get relief. If, on the other hand, an old pigeon is fed but little, he will feed his offspring little or nothing. However, there are exceptions, and I have known an old pigeon to go hungry before he would starve his youngsters.

As the squabs grow older, they clamor for food the moment either parent comes within sight of the nest, all the while flapping their wings madly and peeping loudly. The one which persists in begging and in rushing up to and following either parent usually gets several more feedings than its less forward mate. Sometimes the parents play favorites, that is the male will feed one youngster regularly and the female the other. Sometimes both squabs will insert their beaks into that of the father, who will then feed both simultaneously.

Certain varieties of domestic pigeons known to be dependable feeders, such as homers, tumblers, and others, are frequently used as foster parents for the offspring of those valuable breeds which are poor feeders, such as the short-faced varieties whose beaks are so short as to make feeding of the young impossible. The whole process is initiated either by an interchange of eggs or of young. In the former case one must be reasonably sure that both pairs of pigeons have laid their eggs at approximately the same time so that when the foster parents hatch the eggs given them, there will be the necessary soft food in their crops for the youngsters. If the young are

interchanged, their respective ages must be nearly the same. A pigeon will readily accept another's young if they are still small, but as soon as they have grown pin feathers and have begun to show color, the old birds usually, though not always, detect the fraud and either neglect the foster children or peck them to death. Some varieties of domestic pigeons are kept solely because they are excellent feeders and will raise the young of practically any other variety which does not differ too much from their own in size or shape. Some kinds of doves, notably the common ringneck, will often refuse to feed foster children if these are dark-skinned or otherwise much different from their own young. To overcome this fault, dove fanciers will keep old and young birds in a semi-dark place, where the parents cannot very well see the color of their foster children as these mature and from which place they are not released until the young are able to feed themselves.

Young domestic pigeons are usually full grown and ready to leave the nest at four weeks of age. If they are being fed poorly, they will leave the nest sooner; if they are being fed well, they may remain a few days longer in the nest. Squabs produced for meat purposes are usually killed before they leave the nest, for having indulged in no strenuous flying of any kind, they are fat and juicy at this time, those of the heavier breeds weighing well over a pound. Once youngsters are flying, their flesh becomes firmer and harder day by day.

When a full-fledged young pigeon leaves the nest, he gives his wings their first real test. The youngster makes no so-called trial flights as are supposedly made by the young of other birds, though he will exercise his wings long before actually using them to fly. A young pigeon leaves the nest not because he wants to, but usually because he has to. As he matures, he becomes more and more of a pest to a father who is hard put to filling the ever-empty crop. So the latter begins to slacken his feeding of the youngsters who in their eagerness to be fed rush out of the nest-box and after him with clapping wings often to fall into space and be thus forced to fly.

At first the young pigeon flies clumsily, having special difficulty in judging distances at all well. He will return to the old nest only in pursuit of his parents, especially the father, who ordinarily continues to feed the youngsters for a week

or ten days after they have left the nest. Soon after having flown for the first time, however, the young begin to peck at this and that, so that it is but a few days before they will eat grains. Whereas the young of wild pigeons and doves remain with their parents for a month or more after leaving the nest, those of domestic pigeons are seldom tolerated in the old nesting place longer than a week or ten days after they have left it, for usually another brood is coming on. In other words, most young pigeons must shift for themselves once they have left the nest. One of their first and most important tasks is the finding of a permanent roosting place at night, for which in a crowded loft they must fight many a bitter battle.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Breeding and Keeping*

MANY ARE THE REASONS WHY MEN KEEP PIGEONS. SOME to make their living; some to make extra money; others to take their minds off their work, themselves, or their troubles in general. Still others keep pigeons simply because they love them and cannot be without them for long.

Time was when pigeon-keeping had no respectable reason for being whatever. In England pigeon fanciers were actually despised prior to the year 1858, when John Matthews Eaton published his well-known "Treatise on the Art of Breeding and Managing Fancy Pigeons." Of this, the following excerpt, taken from that book but originally appearing in the "Cottage Gardener and Country Gentleman's Companion," is proof:

"Time was, not many years since, when a 'Pigeon Fancier' was associated in all men's minds with Costermongers, Pugilists, Rat-catchers, and Dogstealers, and for no other reason that we can discern than that the majority of Pigeon Fanciers were artisans—men who lived in the courts, alleys, and other by-places of the metropolis. Such men, in those days, drew towards them no sympathy—they were the profane vulgar—the pariahs of Society—and their pursuits were deemed scarcely fit to be mentioned within audience of 'ears polite.'"

Long since the sentiment toward the pigeon fancier changed. Today the fancy captivates all walks of life in every country. Rich and poor alike find pleasure and profit in this fascinating hobby. Like his father, the then king of England, now Duke of Windsor, was an ardent pigeon fancier, as is the present king.

In America we have too many keepers and not enough lovers of pigeons. "Is there any money in it?" bluntly ask visitors who come to see my birds. And when I assure them that pigeons are simply part of my life in the country, they remark disappointedly, "Oh, just a hobby, eh? Well, you've got some nice birds there." My helpmeet maintains that I am a "pigeonmaniac"—the sort of individual who when out

motoring of a Saturday afternoon seems wholly unable to pass a place where pigeons are kept without stopping to learn what they are, how they are, and how much they are—who cannot enjoy a pigeon show unless he brings back a pair or two of more or less expensive prize-winners. But now to the real subject at hand.

If you decide to keep pigeons, you will very probably do so because you really like them. Perhaps you had some when you were a youngster, and you feel that since you are financially better situated now, you can buy just about the quality of birds for which you have been longing many a year. You trust that pigeons will restore to you some portion of your golden age—enable you to live over again an idyllic phase of your boyhood, to escape for a time each day—a very satisfying time—the wearying monotony of a workaday world.

I maintain that true pigeon fanciers are not made in a few months or years. I am almost tempted to say that they are born with a love for their feathered friends; and I believe this when time after time I read of men who thought they could, as my Missouri friend would put it, “get shed” of this kinship by simply selling all their birds, but who after some strangely lonely years have returned to their favorite hobby with greater fervor than before.

Well, then, if you truly like pigeons; if you, your helpmeet, and your neighbors do not mind their cooing on moonlight nights; if you enjoy doing the work which their care will bring, then make sure that you know exactly what you want pigeons for. Unless you engage in the squab business—and that is risky even for the experienced person—it is well to rid your mind at the very outset of the all-too-common notion that your hobby will yield you handsome monetary reward. Of course, I know that after you have indulged in it for three or four years, you may sell some promising youngsters or perhaps a breeding pair or two at a good price—and the sale will make you as happy as a youngster who has received his first real spending money—, but in the long run the most valuable return you will get from your pigeon project will simply be the fun that is in breeding and caring for birds you love to be with—the feeling of relaxation and of peace with the world that is yours the moment you step among your birds to look after their needs.



Since there are some two hundred odd varieties of pigeons, or, as Darwin would say, races, you should have no great difficulty in finding one or more to suit your tastes. If at the beginning you have no strong preferences, by all means visit some local fanciers and observe the various breeds as well as the conditions under which they are kept. But do not believe all any fancier tells you in praise of his birds. Naturally, he is passionately prejudiced in favor of them and likely to exaggerate their good qualities just as the fancier who is "down" on a certain breed will overemphasize its weaknesses. I recall inquiring the price and quality of Coburg Larks of an eastern breeder, and he replied that he had closed that breed out because they were "the worst fighters I have ever had in my pigeon loft"—and offered me some White Kings! As a matter of fact, Larks—I have kept them for ten years—do not fight any more than do White Kings.

In looking at different varieties of pigeons, try to determine which would meet your needs best. Thus, if you want a bird to grace your backyard or lawn, one that stays at home always, there is the Fantail, one of the oldest and loveliest pigeons extant. If you have a good sense of humor, try the Pigmy Pouter or the English Pouter. The clowns of pigeondom, easily tamed and full of antics, pouters will provide unending amusement for you and yours every day, especially if you give them the freedom of your backyard, which they are not likely to leave for long.

But perhaps it is not the "figure" of pigeons so much that intrigues you as their color, the very sight of which prompts you to exclaim "Isn't that a beauty?" Well, among the two hundred odd varieties, you will find colors so striking and so delicately blended as to make the birds appear painted by the hand of some old master. Look at Blondinettes, Bluettes, and Satinettes, commonly called Oriental Frills, which originated in Asia Minor centuries ago. They, as well as the Starlings, Shields, and Archangels are, at least in my opinion, among the most beautifully colored of pigeons. And to breed any of these varieties true to their markings presupposes the will of a Napoleon I, the patience of a Lincoln, and the tenacity of a Bismarck.

If you live in the country or at the outskirts of town or city, where you have ample room to enjoy the blue heavens above

you, there are the Birmingham Rollers, named after the city in England, and the Oriental Rollers. Aerial acrobats of the first order, these pigeons are bred and trained for stunt flying. Could you wish for pigeons braver or more up-to-date? At almost any height they will go into a roll and drop toward the ground straight as an arrow, only to spin backward with lightning speed as they fall. Birmingham Rollers—they come in all colors—are great favorites with the people of the Holy Land and Europe. Should you be partial to pigeons that speed through the air swiftly like swallows homeward bound, try the Racing Homer, a noble and intelligent bird, the proper keeping of which will bring you innumerable hours of delight. Today the breeding of these fast flyers is done on almost scientific lines and the thrilling sport of racing homers has become worldwide.

Finally, if you want your avocation to yield you not only pleasures of the spirit, but also something carnal in the form of table squabs, you can choose among the utility breeds practically any color, size, or shape you may prefer. I have an aversion to killing the squabs of my fancy pigeons and to eating them. Not so, however, with the pigeons I keep solely for the meat they produce for the table, such as Kings and Carneaux. Among squabbing pigeons of good size are the Hungarians and the Giant Homers. If you want your squabs to weigh a pound apiece or more, then raise Kings, Mondaines, or even Runts, which are the largest domesticated pigeons today.

After you have talked with a number of breeders, visited some of the better pigeon shows, read a magazine and a good book or two on the subject, and have definitely decided on a variety—and provided, of course, you are more than ever determined to get some pigeons and become their friend, not just their owner and keeper, then approaches the time for purchasing your foundation stock. Since this is one of the most critical periods in the evolution of a fancier, I will give you a few suggestions based on my experience with pigeons, which dates back to my tenth year when my father gave me a few pairs of Trumpeters and Austrian Strassers.

Unless you have kept pigeons before, it will be best if you start with but one variety. As you study your birds and work with them, you will gain important fundamental knowledge.

much of which you can later apply to other breeds as well. Remember specialization in a hobby is just as resultful as specialization in business. Concentrate on one breed in order to learn as much about it as possible before you keep several. You will be surprised how much there is to know about its characteristics and habits through really close study—how much difference there is between birds of the same variety, even between mates in the same nest. Start your project with a variety which usually breeds true to size, shape, and color, assuming that you are keeping birds not solely for the fun of it but also for the showroom, as most fanciers are. Forego the fond delusion that you can produce prize-winning English Pouters, Jacobins, or Modenas during your first year or two when you are busy learning the rudiments of pigeon keeping. It requires years of painstaking effort to build up a strain of quality pigeons. All of which brings us to another important matter—the quality of stock in which a beginner should invest his money.

One of the commonest reasons why the novice becomes discouraged after a relatively short time is mediocre foundation stock. He may think he can overcome this mediocrity by feeding his birds well or by giving them especially good care, but this is not true. The only reliable and certainly the most economical way for you to raise quality youngsters, be it from pigeons or from peacocks, is to buy high-grade foundation stock. In the end you will receive far more lasting satisfaction from having bred one pair of quality birds than a dozen pairs of mediocre birds. So start with the very best pigeons you can afford, even if it be but a single pair.

You can buy either from a local breeder, whose birds and reputation you can personally appraise, or from a distant breeder, who advertises in some reliable magazine. Nowadays most established breeders guarantee satisfaction and offer to return the purchase price minus the express charges both ways, if you are not satisfied. If you are buying pigeons "sight-unseen," then be sure to reserve the right to inspect and reject the birds *before* you pay for them. You can do this by simply depositing the total purchase price with the magazine in which you saw the advertisement or with the express company. Either firm will act as your agent in the transaction and will release your money to the seller only after you have received

the pigeons and after you have notified the agent that they are satisfactory to you.

Mated pairs are usually best, for they will soon go to work for you, thus saving you much time and effort right at the start when you are most desirous of seeing your pigeons make a good showing. Never buy pigeons which do not have seamless legbands giving their age; otherwise you are most likely to get old, worn-out stock with which even under the most favorable conditions you will have but indifferent success. If you live in the city, shun the pigeon or poultry dealer who carries a flock of nondescript pigeons in stock, and who will offer you "fancy" pigeons for as little as one or two dollars a pair. Usually you know nothing about the stock he offers for sale, not even the age; for, buying up culls cheaply and in large lots, most dealers make it a point to remove the legbands from old birds because they know that prospective purchasers prefer reasonably young birds. I am acquainted with a dealer in a large city who always has at least two or three hundred pigeons on hand. He crowds them into filthy, small cages, in which the birds have opportunity neither to exercise nor to bathe, so that most of them stand about dejectedly all day long. Truly a miserable lot of always hungry birds that will do no breeder any good whatever. Similar cases you will find in practically every large city despite humane societies and associations for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

The price you will be asked to pay for foundation stock depends on a number of factors, such as the quality of the strain, whether the birds are show-winners or not, the prevailing popularity of the breed, and their age. By consulting the advertising pages of any reliable pigeon magazine, you will soon get a fairly comprehensive idea of the prevailing prices. Always keep in mind the fact that really fine birds are rarely to be had cheaply and that the best are seldom offered for sale, since it is the general practice of fanciers both in this country and abroad not to dispose of their so-called champion stock unless through dire necessity. Before the financial debacle of 1929 you could not buy good squab pigeons, such as White or Silver Kings, on the Pacific Coast for less than seven dollars the mated pair. Today they are scarce at almost any price. Do not expect to obtain fancy pigeons with good blood lines at less than ten dollars a pair and hope for reason-

ably satisfactory results in the show-room, unless perchance there is no competition in the breed which you are showing. Prices for high-quality birds do not vary much from year to year for the simple reason that such birds are rare and snapped up immediately they are placed on the market. The next time you visit a pigeon show, ask the superintendent or one of his assistants to give you the prices of some of the birds which appeal to you. If the show is any good at all, you will find many twenty-five, fifty, and hundred-dollar birds. Champions have sold at five hundred and a thousand dollars apiece, which is not exorbitant when you consider the many years of patient effort as well as the money spent in developing them. Such development is truly an expert's job and deserves an expert's pay!

It is well to mention at this point that most pigeons do well in confinement. At the same time, if you live in a neighborhood where you can give your birds free flying range, the added daily exercise in the open air will help very decidedly to keep them in top-notch physical condition. So do not imprison your birds unless you have to. Remember that after all, they are *birds*, and as such they enjoy winging their way aloft. In this matter, as well as in the type of house to build, you will naturally be guided by the practice of fanciers in your neighborhood, most of whom you will find willing to give you practical advice.

To raise pigeons successfully, you must give the proper feed, water for drinking and bathing, the right health grit, and suitable nesting materials. The most convenient way to provide is by purchase of a good commercial feed. Should you decide to mix the feed yourself, there are various formulas available for your use. One of them provides merely for equal proportions of good yellow corn, Canada or cow peas, hard red wheat, and kaffir corn, all of which must be dry, sweet, and seasoned. Another formula is: Canada peas, 30 lbs.; whole corn, 25 lbs.; buckwheat, 20 lbs.; barley, 15 lbs.; wheat, 5 lbs.; hemp seed, 5 lbs. Once you have discovered a mixture on which your birds thrive, by all means keep on using it. For best results feed twice a day, at seven (or earlier) in the morning and between three and four in the afternoon, using for the purpose a narrow wooden or metal trough which the

birds cannot easily soil. Many squab breeders simply throw the feed on the floor of the house.

Regularity in feeding is important, especially if there are youngsters in the nests. Nothing retards their uniform development more than haphazard feeding—letting them go hungry for many hours and then overfeeding. As to the quantity of feed required, that depends on the number and the size of your birds, the amount of exercise they get, the number of squabs they are feeding, and the climate. A safe rule to follow is to give as much feed as will be cleaned up in fifteen or twenty minutes.

If any feed is left in the trough, reduce the ration. Naturally your pigeons will consume much more feed when they have youngsters in the nests, so that you must adjust your rations accordingly.

If you cannot, for good reasons, feed regularly each day, a self-feeder may solve your problem. By means of it your birds can eat at any time. Many pigeon men object to self-feeders because they have a tendency to fatten the birds and to attract mice and rats. It is always better to underfeed than to overfeed pigeons. Moreover, hand-feeding them is one of the most enjoyable tasks of the hobby. Many pigeon men use it as a means of taming their birds so that they will take the feed out of their hands. Occasionally, however, when you have to be away from home for a few days or even a week, and you do not wish to burden your wife or neighbors with the care of your pets, a self-feeder—varying sizes will hold varying amounts of grain—proves very useful. In addition to grains, give your birds fresh greens, such as crisp lettuce, kale, or chickweed, all of which they relish greatly, once a week.

Pigeons need water for drinking and for bathing. The one should be kept separate from the other. Clean and cool drinking water is best supplied them by means of an automatic fountain or a slowly dripping faucet suitably covered to prevent soiling. Bath water is given twice a week or oftener in large pans, in which the birds can stand and splash till satisfied. Since they will drink this water, it should be promptly removed after the bath. All domestic pigeons love to bathe, and will keep clean if provided with the right opportunity. I have seen youngsters scarcely a week out of the nest hop into the bath pans and

splash about vigorously. Following the bath, the birds will stand in the sun preening and airing their plumage. If the old birds are on eggs, the moisture which they bring with them from the bath helps to keep the eggs in hatchable condition. The lack of moisture makes itself felt especially in the case of those pigeons which do not care to bathe. The eggs of my Australian Bronze-wing pigeons would frequently not hatch even though they were fertile. They lacked perhaps a certain moisture to keep the inner membrane to which the shell adheres from becoming too hard for the young squab to puncture at hatching time. This particular foreign pigeon prefers sun to water baths. Now, two days before hatching time I place both eggs in lukewarm water for a few moments, and they hatch.

Grit is as needful for the pigeon's health as are feed and water. It contains crushed rock, ground oystershell, charcoal, salt, and other minerals required by seedeaters. It is well to keep grit before your birds all the time and to let them eat as much of it as they like. They relish it especially when it is slightly moist. Place the grit in a covered hopper so that it will stay clean. There are many good pigeon grits on the market, priced usually at a few cents a pound. The absolute need which pigeons have for grit was never more deeply impressed on my mind than by the horrible condition of a number of half-grown squabs whose parents had been given no grit during the owner's absence; only grain and water. There was not a single healthy squab in the entire pigeon house—all were undersized, sick, and many strangely deformed. If the birds had not been penned up—wholly dependent on their ignorant keeper—they would have obtained themselves the minerals necessary for their own as well as their youngsters' health.

Usually pigeons are ready for mating at four or five months of age. In those parts of the country having mild winters, they breed practically the year round, though most pigeon men will keep the sexes apart during the moulting season (August to October) and the winter in order to afford their birds a deserved rest.

As I have stated elsewhere in this book, a male pigeon will mate with any female which happens to strike his fancy. In breeding for a purpose, force-mating is resorted to because the fancier wants constantly to improve his strain. He places male and female in the mating coop, a cage with two small

compartments separated by a wire-door through which the birds can see each other. Just as with human beings, so with pigeons propinquity is an important factor in inducing matings. After a few hours' or a few days' acquaintance of this sort, the birds usually show willingness to pair and the dividing door is opened. Once paired, they are kept in the mating cage for a few more days before being returned to their pen. Occasionally you will find a pair of pigeons that simply resists all your well-laid plans and efforts to mate them, no matter how long you keep them together. The only thing to do under such conditions is to replace either bird with another. While being mated, neither bird should see or hear his or her former mate. The process of pairing may be somewhat hastened by feeding the birds millet or other stimulating seed.

It is possible here to give only general suggestions for mating pigeons, which practice itself is a fine art, learned only after years of intelligent experimentation. Among the points generally considered in mating two birds are: weight, length, carriage, proportion, color and texture of feathers, size of bone, shape and size of head, and the eye. Avoid mating birds with similar faults which might be accentuated in the offspring. Ordinarily do not pair a large male with a small female or vice versa; in fact, avoid mating any birds which differ greatly from each other in essential respects. The best male and the best female which you can purchase or which you have raised, may not be logical mates owing to the defects which both have. In breeding, it is best to mate so as to eliminate faults in order to secure young which will be of definitely higher quality in certain respects than their parents. Every breeder has certain objectives which he wishes to attain in size, shape, color, and other properties. Often he has in mind an ideal bird which in every respect meets the standard set up by the fanciers of its variety. And though he knows well that he will never raise a perfect bird, he will yet put forth every possible effort to approach the standard as closely as possible. If he is a true fancier, he will plan his breeding activities for several seasons ahead in order to develop his own strain of pigeons, recognizable by their individual characteristics. Today there are outstanding strains in practically every variety of pigeons—the result of years of intelligent and rigidly selective breeding.



Sometimes beginners in the fancy will find it difficult to sex pigeons, especially younger birds. Old pigeons are easily sexed, for, as explained elsewhere in this work, the male is usually somewhat larger than the female. His neck is thicker. In cooing, he will turn completely around. It is he who drives the hen to the nest after the pair has mated, and who sits on the eggs in the middle of the day. Moreover, if you observe him closely, you will find him much more aggressive in all his actions than the female. Even his way of drinking—he thrusts his beak quickly and far into the water, taking it in large, quick draughts—is different from that of the hen: she drinks much more leisurely and daintily. Lastly, owing to her egg-laying activity, the ventbones of an old female are much wider apart than those of the male.

To sex pigeons before they have reached mating age (four or five months) is practically impossible. At approaching maturity the young males coo louder and longer. Generally speaking, they are somewhat larger than the females and show a greater inclination to fight. Two eggs in a nest do not always produce a true pair. Frequently nest-mates turn out to be males. This is likewise true of foreign pigeons and doves. I have bred the dainty Cape Dove for a number of years. These birds produce five or more males for every female, rearing their young in our climate (Pacific Coast) practically the year round. According to findings of the Carnegie Institute, there is a positive correlation between the seasons and the number of male and female pigeons produced. Thus in summer when the old birds consume much less food energy than in winter, there is supposedly, an increased number of calories stored in the ovum which results in more females being hatched. That this is not generally true, however, that it does not apply to doves (which are also pigeons) is shown by the experience of breeders of certain foreign doves, who generally report many more males of a certain variety than females both in summer and in winter.

To get satisfactory results from your breeding pairs, remove all odd birds from your house and place them in a separate pen. Extra males and females have a very pronounced tendency to fight and break up your mated pairs, thus causing frequently the loss of eggs and young. Get rid of all extra birds

even if you have to pot them. Remove youngsters to a separate pen when they are six or seven weeks old.

Inspect your pigeon project regularly, either in the day or at night as often as you can. Mr. Wendell M. Levi, who has for years operated a large squab plant successfully, prefers to go through his numerous pens with a flashlight at night when all birds are settled in or on their respective nest-boxes. Since the pigeons are quiet at that time, it is comparatively simple to check up on matings, to pick up birds for banding and other purposes. Your presence at night disturbs your birds much less than it does in the daytime. However, this by no means applies to foreign doves and pigeons, for if you should inspect their nests at night, they would leave them at once and for good, flying so violently against the wire of the pen as to injure themselves seriously.

As you go through your pigeon house, test eggs for fertility on the fourth or fifth day of incubation by holding them against the light and looking for a dark spot. If you find clear eggs in the same nest repeatedly, break up the pair which has laid them and re-mate both birds with others. Mating an old female with a young male and vice versa will sometimes produce fertile eggs as does also conditioning—giving your birds plenty of exercise and feeding them sparingly for a time.

Ordinarily the larger the breed, the larger the egg it lays. The egg of the average domestic pigeon is between 32 and 40 mm. long and between 25 and 32 mm. wide. When first laid, it weighs from 10 to 20 gr. The Victoria Crowned Pigeons, spectacular birds with handsome, fanshaped crests, sometimes kept in zoos, are among the largest members of the pigeon family in existence, measuring in length from 25 to 34 inches or approximately 75 cm. Like most of the larger breeds of foreign pigeons, they lay but one egg, which is approximately two and a-half inches in length and one and a-half inches in diameter. The eggs of domestic pigeons are white, whereas those of some of the foreign varieties, such as the Indian Greenwing and the Cape Dove have a creamy color. At times domestic pigeons lay unusually large, double-yolked eggs, which hatch but seldom. However, some years ago Mr. Richard Whitney reported in the *American Pigeon Journal* the case of a double-yolked egg with openings at each end at hatching time, from

which later in the day two normal young (Baldhead Tumblers) emerged. Since the other egg, which was of ordinary size, hatched also, there were three youngsters at one time in this particular nest.

As you go through the pigeon house, feel the crops of your squabs in the nests occasionally so as to ascertain which of your birds are dependable and which poor feeders. You will be surprised at the rapidity with which the young pigeons grow. When hatched, the squabs of the common pigeon weigh only approximately 17 gr. On the sixth day they weigh nearly nine times as much, or 150 gr.; on the seventh, 190 gr.; on the ninth, 260 gr.; and at four weeks of age, 380 gr. Perhaps the main reason for this astounding growth lies in the fact that in the early stages the parent birds pump into the squabs at each feeding no less than one-fifth of the body weight of the young bird! Moreover, for three or four days the young are fed entirely on so-called pigeon milk, containing fourteen parts albumen, eight parts of fat, one part of mineral, and seventy-seven parts of water.

If you are breeding English Pouters or short-faced varieties, such as Blondinettes or Bluettes, which are usually poor feeders, you must have on hand suitable foster parents as, for instance, homers or tumblers. Usually it is better to transfer eggs rather than squabs, making sure that both pairs laid at approximately the same time so that the foster parents will have milk at hatching time. The difference in laying time should by no means exceed three days. Always have at least two pairs of foster parents for each pair of fancy birds, for sometimes it happens that the squabs are very uneven in size, the one being a day or two older, in which case to raise both it will be well to give but one to a pair of foster parents.

If any young squabs leave their nests before they are four weeks old and matured, it is usually a sign of insufficient feeding. Whenever you wish to keep young birds for breeding, you should mark them at an early age with seamless legbands which give the year they were raised. Such bands, by the way, are the only ones recognized in respectable pigeon shows. You will also find that quick and unmistakable recognition of a pigeon's age by means of a seamless band is a definite aid in selling it. In addition to seamless bands, many breeders use colored bands with large numbers, banding the male bird on

the right and the female on the left leg, so that they may be easily recognized at any time and distinguished from other pairs in the loft. Lastly, such marking and numbering simplifies the keeping of breeding records.

Once you have kept pigeons for a year or two and have really learned to love them for the interest and relaxation they afford you daily, you will find it a great stimulus to your hobby to join a local pigeon club. Membership in such an organization—dues are usually but a few dollars a year—brings you at once into close personal contact with like-minded persons from many walks of life, whose counsel and experience should prove very helpful and valuable to you. Moreover, each club usually stages a number of informal, so-called table shows during the year, at which you can exhibit your birds and see them judged in friendly competition before the opening of the large fall shows. Thus you will know how good your birds really are. There is great satisfaction in showing pigeons at the larger poultry and pigeon shows, especially in those classes in which many birds compete for honors. On such occasions you have an excellent opportunity to observe the actual judging, thus learning the fine points of the breeds in which you are especially interested, and to get acquainted with noted pigeon men from various parts of the country—acquaintanceships which with the passing years sometimes ripen into rare friendships.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Lofts*

#### THEIR EQUIPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

**I**F A FEATHERED CREATURE, SUCH AS THE DOMESTIC PIGEON, IS to be kept year after year where it is wholly dependent on its keeper for food, drink, and general well-being, there should be painstaking care to provide a loft meeting the requirements of the particular varieties and, more important, accommodating the maximum number without crowding. The old custom of placing pigeons in any sort of make-shift "loft"—a discarded dry-goods or piano box, a dilapidated, mouse-infested barn or other outhouse is more and more giving way to the practice of carefully planning and building a permanent pigeon house comfortable for the birds, convenient for their keeper, and suited to its location and its surroundings—a loft, in short, which does not have to be altered in important respects every season.

This is not to be interpreted as implying that of necessity pigeons require showy and expensive housing accommodations to stay healthy and to breed successfully. Far from it! The man of limited means can, and does, ride the pigeon hobby, but he usually has to content himself with a simple, serviceable pigeon house. In America, as well as in Europe, there are literally thousands of plain, home-made lofts for every one that is costly and at all pretentious. One sultry summer morning as I looked out from a tenth-story hotel window in the heart of New York City, I saw a middle-aged man in an old-fashioned rocker on the flat roof of an apartment building, high above the din of the street below, apparently enjoying the activities of two or three pairs of racing homers which he kept in an unpainted packing-box converted into a "pent-house racing loft." It is no exaggeration to say that most of Europe's pigeons—fancy, racing, and utility—are kept in very plain and modest places—in open boxes fastened under the steaming ceilings of horse and cow stables, in attics, often very inac-

cessible, and in picturesque, towerlike little dovecotes atop high poles and very hard to get at or into. Of course, the fact that the average European fancier lets his birds fly and forage practically the year round, makes elaborate loft and fly-pen facilities unnecessary. In this country, however, where house owners frequently object to having their roofs soiled by neighbors' pigeons and where municipal laws often prevent fanciers from liberating their birds at all, substantially built and permanent lofts with adjoining fly or exercise-pens are the general custom.

In providing suitable housing for your pigeons, consider carefully the following important factors: climatic conditions; variety and limit number of birds to be housed, now and later; available location, amount of space and of money; permanence of housing, i.e., length of time for which birds are to be maintained in a particular loft. Far too many lofts are put up on the spur of the moment, resulting in make-shift structures ill suited to the needs of the birds and their keepers—"eye-sores" marring their immediate surroundings! For this reason it is well, first of all, to select a suitable site for your pigeon project, one which is readily accessible to you in good and bad weather, one which affords good drainage for copious waste water, plenty of light and morning sun, and, finally, shelter from sudden exposure to wind and rain.

Naturally, the exact location of your loft depends on the purpose for which you keep pigeons—fancy, racing, or utility. If you fly pigeons—homers, tipplers, rollers, and the like—your loft should not be set low in the midst of a lot of buildings or under trees and telegraph wires, since such a location would seriously interfere with giving your flyers a clear view of their loft and its surroundings either when they are about to leave it or when returning they are eager to find it. If at all possible, your flying loft should be some distance from buildings and trees—where your birds can wing their way aloft unhindered and immediately after leaving the trap, and where you can observe them readily and clearly whenever you desire.

If you live in a crowded city and have no open-loft location available, then set your loft as high above ground as is practicable and convenient, thus making it easy for your charges to find as well as to enter their home. A great many racing and roller lofts are placed atop outhouses and serve their pur-

poses quite well. In the old country—in Belgium, Germany, and Italy—you find the spacious attic of many a modest dwelling turned into a pigeon loft, their occupants sunning themselves on the steep tile roofs or circling methodically above the housetops.

If, on the other hand, you keep fancy or utility pigeons, then you should place your pigeon house on the ground in as sheltered and accessible a site as you can find. In shape, type of construction, color, and general appearance, your loft should harmonize with its immediate surroundings, just as if it were an integral part of its natural setting. That is where careful planning and building play a vital role. Frequently it costs but little more in labor and material to set up a pigeon house that is not merely practical but also attractive and suited to its surroundings—one you really enjoy showing to your friends and fellow fanciers. To ascertain the type most suitable for your locality and purpose, call on fanciers near by whose lofts are clean, impressive in appearance, and equipped with labor and time-saving devices, and discuss your loft problem with them. Then plan your own loft. Utilize the other fellow's good ideas, but do not copy his whole building scheme. The more individuality your loft has, the prouder you will be of it, and no matter how "perfect" the other fellow's loft may seem, it can doubtless be improved in essential respects. Keep in mind that you will wish to adapt your structure in situation, size, construction, and color to your particular location—which naturally differs considerably from that of any other fancier. In other words, you have a problem of your own to solve and your own *thoughtful* solution is likely to be the most fitting and satisfactory in the end.

Should pigeons be a permanent rather than a passing fancy with you, it will be wise to plan for at least three individual and roomy pens: one for the youngsters and odd birds; and two for breeders, the latter two to be used for housing cocks and hens separately before and after the breeding season. To these three pens might well be attached a small room to be used for the storage of feed and miscellaneous supplies and for the display in show-cages of birds when friends and visitors call to admire your quality stock. Now for some specific suggestions.

On the Pacific Coast and in other regions with mild winter

climates, wooden houses with partially or wholly open fronts and with adjoining wire fly-pens are the custom. Tight-fitting walls made of tongue-and-groove lumber or fabricated material prevent drafts—and consequently colds in your birds. In the eastern and mid-western states, pigeon houses have solid, closed fronts, which may be opened whenever desirable. Since pigeons kept in moist or wet places will not thrive, your loft should have a solid and sloping roof. The particular kind of roof required varies with local climatic conditions. Thus, if there is much rain and snow-fall in your locality, the roof will have to be more durable and weighty than the ordinary composition or tarpaper roof used in mild climates. In regions of damp snow, the roof should be steeper in order to prevent sag or collapse. In windy regions, a roof of sheet-metal, bolted fast, may be the most secure and useful. Slate, shingle, and tile roofs, while somewhat high in initial cost, afford both beauty and permanence. It is well to have the roof extend at least partially over the fly-pen to keep rain or snow out of the breeding quarters.

To prevent mice and other marauders from bothering their birds, fanciers set their wooden lofts on solid concrete foundations and cover the concrete floors with thick layers of fresh gravel, which they renew every season. If they use sand floors, they sink quarter-inch wire-mesh under such floors. In England I saw fancy pigeons kept on concrete floors without covering of sand—and to all appearances thriving. However, when such floors become damp or wet, the birds are likely to catch colds. This hazard can be eliminated by placing a second, tight-fitting wood floor six or more inches above the concrete floor. The intervening air space provides ventilation, summer and winter. To render their lofts mice-free, many pigeon men keep the floors sufficiently high above ground to permit cats to roam underneath. An eastern fancier who found his concrete floors hard to clean in winter covers them to a depth of two or three inches with dry straw. To prevent his birds from whipping the straw into corners or into feed and water containers, he sets a small table, about twelve inches high, in the center of each pen on which he puts feed, water, and grit containers. With the opening of the breeding season in spring, the straw is replaced with sand and the tables are removed.

So far as nesting space is concerned, it is best to provide



two nest-boxes for each mated pair; frequently the birds will have young in one and eggs in the other. As you know, pigeons are very prolific. Avoid crowding your birds and thus prevent fighting and loss of eggs and young. Do not fill your house to utmost capacity, unless you are in the squab business and must of necessity utilize every inch of available space; and even then it is not really worth while. Ordinarily it is much better to have more nest-boxes in your loft than pairs of birds. Allow one cubic foot of nest-box space for each pair of breeders. Nest-boxes with easily removable bottoms may be cleaned quickly and thoroughly. Usually only the back-wall of the house is used for nest-box space since the sunlight strikes it more directly than the side-walls, and since the fancier can readily watch nesting activities from the outside without having to enter the loft. Some fanciers who breed for color values shade both nests and fly-pen to prevent strong sunlight from fading the plumage of their birds. Since pigeons like to use their old nests over and over again, many fanciers will clean nest-boxes only a few times a year, at the same time spraying the entire interior of the loft thoroughly with a strong disinfectant and dusting all birds with insect powder.

An inexpensive and quick method of providing nesting space is followed by a breeder who nails 12" x 12" x 18" wide boxes, with inverted-V perches projecting six inches from the center of the front and bottom edge to the back-wall, in rows six inches apart horizontally and twelve inches apart vertically. The arrangement provides for a box and an open space to alternate horizontally. This method, so the fancier assures me, gives the birds privacy, prevents fighting, and affords roosting space on top of each box for resting birds. The floor space of the box is large enough to give the youngsters a sort of runway as they grow up.

There is a growing tendency among progressive breeders to provide individual breeding compartments, or even individual pens, *for each pair of breeders*—a practice which gives the birds complete privacy and their owner better control over them. Particularly valuable are such single-pair breeding quarters for varieties which tend to fight and break eggs. Varying in size with the breed it is meant to house comfortably, each compartment resembles an open book-shelf, which is equipped with an easily removable wire-front containing

one or two doors. Usually a breeding pair is kept in the compartment until it has laid its first setting of eggs. Since few pairs lay at exactly the same time, the liberation of the various pairs can be gradual, promoting in each pair a sense of ownership of its nest and preventing that contention over nest-sites so common in lofts in which birds select their own nest-boxes.

Some fanciers go a step farther and keep each breeding pair in a separate pen during the entire breeding season. R. T. Shamhart, well-known king breeder, has found this arrangement satisfactory. Each one of his breeding pairs has a roomy nesting compartment to itself, fronted by an equally roomy fly or exercise pen. There are no perches or alighting boards in these little lofts. While the different pairs can see one another through the wire partitions separating the various pens, they can have no actual contact with one another. Naturally, to keep many pairs under such favorable conditions would require a large amount not only of housing and equipment, but also of time and care. Moreover, there is a tendency on the part of pigeons so kept to waste considerable feed if they have access to a self-feeder. A prominent fantail fancier has found that his birds will breed better when they have opportunity to mingle freely with other birds. He keeps about a dozen pairs of birds together in a pen, giving each a separate nesting compartment, in which it is caged at the beginning of the season until it has laid the first setting of eggs.

Another innovation liked by many fanciers is the use of individual wood-pulp, glazed-china, or tin nest-bowls, filled in part with sand or sawdust, in which the pigeons lay their eggs. The sand absorbs the moisture and does not, so some fanciers maintain, permit pigeon-flies to breed in it if a pinch of Black-leaf Forty is placed in the bottom of the bowl. Not only does this practice save the expense and bother of providing tobacco stems or other nesting material, but it simplifies cleaning, since all that is required at the proper time is to empty the bowl into some handy receptacle. Mites and other parasites do not find easy refuge in the walls of a china or tin bowl.

If nest-bowls are not used, then, of course, nesting materials in the form of long-leaf pine needles, oat straw, tobacco stems, or cedar sawdust, must be supplied. Simply place a quantity of the material (except, of course, the sawdust, which is placed

direct in the nest-box or nest-bowl) in an empty box or crate on the floor of the house where the birds will get it as they need it. The strong odor of tobacco stems and pine needles repels lice, with which pigeons are sometimes troubled. However, this odor will not drive away the pigeon fly, a bloodsucker found on old as well as on young birds, especially in regions with mild winter climates. Only cleaning and spraying of nest boxes every two weeks with a kerosene-pyrethrum extract and dipping of all old birds in sodium fluoride solution will control these pests.

The practice of providing perches and alighting or settling boards varies. Heavy breeds, such as Kings, Strassers, Florentines, and the like, require few if any such rests, while birds given to much flying, such as homers, rollers, tumblers, and the like, require more. Thick, smooth alighting boards that do not warp easily should be placed at a convenient height along one or more sides in the fly-pen, and far enough away from wall or wire-mesh so as not to interfere with the birds' mating activities. For individual perches, the invert V-( $\wedge$ ) shape is best since it prevents the perching bird from soiling those sitting below.

The descriptions and pictures of various lofts appearing in the following pages are offered not as ideals or models to be copied in every detail, but rather as constructive suggestions to any fancier planning to build a loft. You will observe that no two of these modern lofts are alike.

## A PRACTICAL FANTAIL LOFT

In 1933 Mr. Gerald Champ, a noted breeder of fantails for over thirty-five years, moved from San Diego, California, to Chula Vista, California, where the loft about to be described is located. It was designed with a view to erecting not a showy or expensive, but a thoroughly practical and permanent pigeon house which would provide clean, comfortable, airy, and bright surroundings, and which would not need to be altered in any important respect from season to season. That the loft has met fully its owner's exacting requirements is in part proved by the fact that during ten years' use not a single occupant has been troubled with any sort of cold.

The main breeding loft, facing South (See pictures numbers 9 to 11) is 32 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 6 feet, 3 inches high in front and in the rear, and 7 feet high near the center. It is constructed of tongue-and-groove siding on a twelve-inch concrete foundation and covered with a slate-surfaced roof. The earthen floor of this loft is covered with sand to a depth of about eight inches, which is renewed each season and which is easily cleaned of droppings from time to time with a rake toothed with lath nails. Four 28-inch wide front-doors afford separate entrance to the individual pens. Along the front of the entire loft runs a 30-inch wide concrete walk. Water is piped to each pen, and the entire loft is electrically lighted. The birds bathe in galvanized refrigerator pans 14 inches wide by 4 inches deep. To avoid crowding and breaking of tails, no perches have been placed in the loft, only shelves.

As may be seen in the photograph of the main building, the wire partitions extend six feet from the front to the loft proper, an arrangement providing a covered fly-pen in front of each of the breeding compartments. This fly-pen is boarded up at the bottom of the front to a height of 18 inches as a protection against wind and prowling cats and dogs.

Before and after the breeding season, each of the four pens in the loft contains little else than the three shelves, each 24 inches deep, placed along one side and the rear. The bottom-shelf is 16 inches above the floor of the pen. The compartments for breeding are created by nailing on between the shelves 12-inch boards which are cut to fit. (Refer to picture of Loft Interior, which shows these boards nailed up for use.) Two or three small nails in each board are sufficient.

Each of the four pens accommodates twelve pairs of breeders, each in an individual breeding compartment four feet long, two feet deep, and seventeen inches high, the front closed temporarily with wire-netting. The pairs remain for the most part in these compartments until the first eggs are laid. However, during nesting time all are let out—a few pairs at a time—simply by loosening and turning back the netting; thus the birds learn quickly the location of their nest-sites. In this way much confusion and fighting in the loft are avoided, and the fantails settle down quickly to the business of nesting.

Tin or enameled 11-inch wash-basins, weighted with a handful of sand, serve as nests. Before the breeding season begins,

these basins, as well as the whole interior of the loft, are thoroughly sprayed with lice-killer, and each bird is dusted with insect powder.

In the two-floor nursery (See picture number 10), which is fronted by a roomy fly-pen, the young fantails are kept up to the time when cocks and hens should be separated and placed in the main loft. It is 12 feet long, 4 feet and 2 inches deep, and 6 feet 10 inches high. Its board-floors are covered with sand. The adjoining fly-pen, of one-inch wire-mesh on a light frame, is 12 feet long, 7 feet 8 inches deep, and 7 feet high. The lower floor is nine inches above the ground to permit cats to hunt under it. A twelve-inch board running across the front of the fly-pen at the bottom serves as wind-break. The metal piece sloping over the lower-floor door keeps young fantails from perching on top of the door and thus breaking their tails by perching or fighting.

When the youngsters are first removed from the breeding loft, usually at about eight weeks of age or whenever they have learned to eat, they are placed in the second story of the nursery until they can take better care of themselves; then they are transferred to the lower floor and adjoining fly-pen. However, at times it has been found wise to alternate the use of the fly-pen for the birds on the two floors in order to give both groups opportunity to bask in the sun and to get more exercise.

Judging from his experience with breeding fantails in St. Joseph, Mo., Mr. Champ believes that his present loft equipped with a removable glass-front behind the wire-netting and with a board-floor covered with shavings, instead of an earth floor covered with sand, would serve well in colder climates.

A majority of fantails will breed better, in the opinion of this experienced fancier, if they are kept with others of their kind than if they are kept by themselves in single pens. Living "in flock" insures more exercise and, consequently, for a majority of pairs better egg fertility. Furthermore, there is usually less overeating on the part of the birds to cause leg weakness, excessive fattening, and other troubles. When kept by themselves, fantails, like most other varieties, will pick out the rich grains.

During the breeding season, Mr. Champ feeds in the morning and in the late afternoon; during the remainder of the

year only in the morning. He simply throws the grains on the sand—the quantity which the birds will clean up before the next feeding time. Salt spools, as usually supplied to rabbits, are placed in every pen, together with plenty of grit. He also feeds green stuff at intervals, such as lettuce, New Zealand spinach, and the like.

Mr. Champ usually mates his birds between February 1 and 15, and begins to separate them about July 4. He trims the tails of hens for breeding, but rarely those of cocks, a practice which has resulted in satisfactory fertility. He does not use feeders (foster parents) since his experience has shown that about 95% of fantails raise their own young to maturity without any outside help.

This fancier finds that one of the special problems of the California pigeon breeder is the long, slow moult occasioned by the equable climate. This disadvantage often prevents many good birds from being sent to local and Eastern shows and club-meets. Incidentally, the approximate cost of Mr. Champ's fantail loft, including all materials and labor, was \$150.00 but it would be almost double that at this writing (1944)!

## A SUBSTANTIALLY-BUILT MUFF-TUMBLER LOFT

Close-up views featuring interior appointments of the muff-tumbler loft built by Mr. H. R. Stafford, noted fancier of North Hollywood, California, appear following page 54, numbers 12 to 15. Set in a spacious garden plot, this exceptionally well-built and well-kept loft, painted white with black trimmings, consists of wooden houses with adjoining fly-pens, all set on concrete foundations, in groups of two and three units.

The approximate dimensions of one of these units—one fly-pen with adjoining breeding quarters in the rear—are: width 5 feet; height 6 feet at lowest point to 8 feet at highest point in shingle roof; depth 15 feet, of which 8 feet are occupied by the fly-pen. Entrance to each unit is gained through a gate 22 inches wide and 5 feet high, located in the front of the wire-flight, which is covered on all sides and top with one-inch mesh. Covered water and grit-containers are placed in the fly-

pens, the sand floors of which give quick drainage for all waste water, there being also under each faucet separate little cess-pools.

As clearly shown in the photograph, the breeding quarters, with the lower-half of the door closed and the upper-half always open, afford the birds secluded, slightly dark, and completely draft-proof surroundings in which to raise their offspring to maturity. Against the right side-wall of these quarters are fastened twelve individual, cage-like nesting compartments, some made of wood and others of wire. Each compartment is 17 inches across the front, 13 inches high, and 16 inches deep; each has a door in the front center. On the wall opposite are individual  $\wedge$ -shaped perches. Light enters the breeding quarters not only through the open half of the door, but also through an ample, screened window in the back-wall, immediately below the roof. This window is used also for ventilation. During inclement weather, a 20-inch wide drop-curtain, running straight across the pen between the top of the fly-pen and the roof of the breeding house, may be lowered sufficiently to protect the entrance and front portion against wind and rain. Each one of the lofts is provided with electric lights, with wires underground.

In some of his pens, Mr. Stafford uses wire-cages for breeding, similar to exhibition cages used in shows. These cages he boards in on wooden shelves covered with wood-shavings. As nest "boxes" serve bottomless frames, 8 inches long, 8 inches wide, and 3 inches high, also filled with shavings. Along the outside front-bottoms of these cages runs an alighting board about six inches wide, on which are uprights about three inches wide to separate the compartments from one another.

In the youngster pen appears a large wall-perch with five shelves, each divided into ten 12" x 12" perching squares, the whole accommodating fifty birds. Since no shelf is even in part under any other, the birds cannot soil those sitting below. This structure provides ample perching space for each bird day and night, and it eliminates much fighting.

Adjoining one of the pens is a special exhibition and record room, suitably furnished and decorated, where visiting fanciers may enjoy special exhibitions of fine pigeons. That these carefully planned, soundly built, and generally attractive lofts have met their owner's expectations is evidenced by the success

which year after year crowns his efforts to produce superior-grade muff-tumblers.

## A PRACTICAL MID-WESTERN KING LOFT

Mr. O. R. Franz of Sioux City, Iowa, breeds white, blue, and silver Kings largely for show purposes in a new loft 20' long, 8' wide, 6½' high in front, and 5½' high in the rear (see photographs numbers 16 and 17). This roomy loft, facing South, is divided into three pens, each one accommodating eight pairs of breeders. The fly-pens, provided with gravel floors and enclosed with 1" wire-mesh, are 20' long, 8' wide, and 5' high.

The walls of this attractive loft are made of 1"-thick fabricated board, which comes in sheets 4' x 8'. This asphalt-covered, weatherproof material is painted black rather than white for obvious reasons. It is somewhat less expensive than lumber and easy to manipulate. The top of the loft-building is covered with asphalt roofing and the bottom with a 3"-thick, level concrete floor, on which rises a cement foundation 12" high and 6" thick. The cement floor is rat and moisture-proof, and easy to scrape. In winter the cement flooring is covered with straw to keep the birds' feet from touching the ice-cold cement.

The loft is entered from the west-end through a solid door, 28 inches wide, and 5 feet high.

Light enters the loft through six Flexiglas windows, each one 40 inches wide and 36 inches high, set in the front wall of the loft on top of the foundation. They are kept open during summer and closed during winter, at which latter time the birds can reach the fly-pens through special, doorlike openings, 6½" high and 7" wide, which have alighting boards at either end. An ample supply of fresh air is made available by two ventilators built underneath the rafters, one at each end of the loft. They are 28" long, at the front 12" high, and at the rear 8" high. In winter the ventilators are covered with cloth to prevent drafts in the loft.

Owing to the scarcity of lumber existing at the time this loft was built, orange crates were used for nest-boxes. Each pen accommodates 8 such boxes, the first row being 14" off



the floor and set on the two-by-four which rests on the cement foundation. Each tier of nests contains two crates, which are placed on racks made of two one-by-two's spaced ten inches apart. The racks are placed 14" above each other so that the crates may be slipped in and out from the front with ease. Each nest has a sliding board in it to which a one-by-four, as long as the sliding board is wide, is nailed to form the front of the nest.

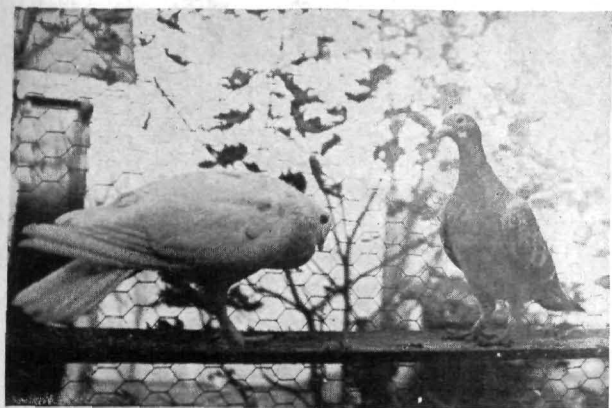
Each two crates are separated by the wall-studding and also by a two-by-four running from the floor to the roof of the pen. To the two-by-four is nailed a one-by-twelve vertically to keep nest-pairs apart. Projecting cleats are nailed at the ends of the racks to support a one-by-four which fronts each nest-box, serving as an alighting board. Each nesting compartment is 42 inches long, with the crate occupying 27 inches, leaving about 14 inches of space, in which the cock may roost at night.

Mr. Franz places separately in a five-compartment cafeteria feeder hard corn, wheat, milo, Canada peas, and pellets. This feeder, which is 3 feet long and 12 inches high, has a window-screen bottom to allow dust, etc., to escape. It is set a foot off the floor and has a 4"-wide walking board in front. Being double, the feeder serves two pens of birds. This fancier uses a commercial grit. He supplies his birds with water in 5-gallon insulated, galvanized fountains.

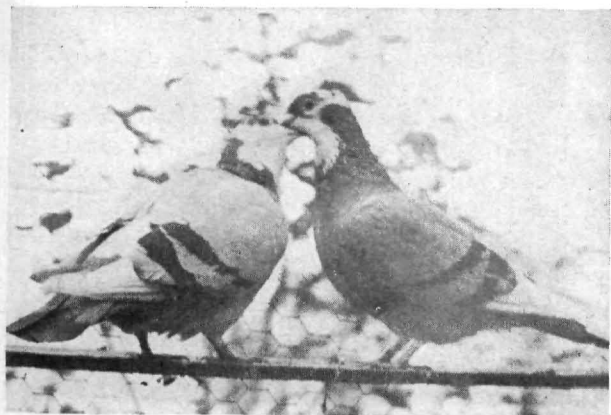
This practical mid-western pigeon loft was built by Messrs. Franz and Chilson, well-known Iowa fanciers, the materials costing approximately \$130.00.

## A MODERN ROLLER LOFT

Since the hobby of flying rollers is increasing in popularity every year, it is well to have a good look at an up-to-date flying loft. The one about to be described (See pictures 18 to 21) belongs to Mr. Reuben R. George of Chicago Heights, Illinois. It was erected at an approximate cost of \$250.00. This special flying loft for young rollers consists of a wooden, windowless building facing West. It is 12 feet long, 9 feet deep, 8 feet high at the extreme rear, and 6 feet at the extreme front. Its outside walls and under-roof are lined with Celotex to keep the birds warm in winter. The loft is divided into three wood-floor compartments, each 5' 8" deep, and each having a 29"-wide wire-

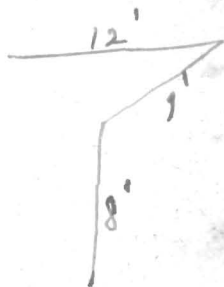


**1 THIS WOOPER SAYS IT WITH COOS**



**2 PIGEONS BILLING**

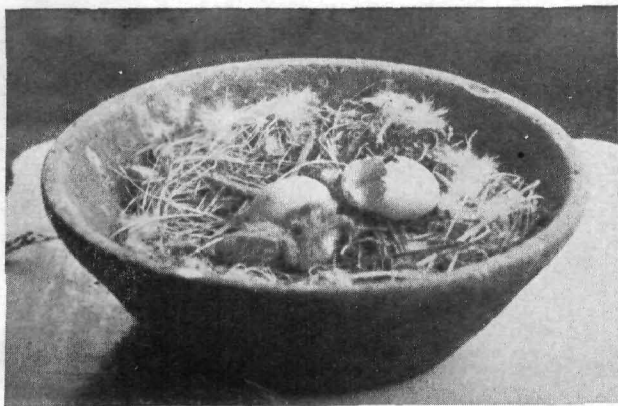
*Cock on the left; hen on the right.*



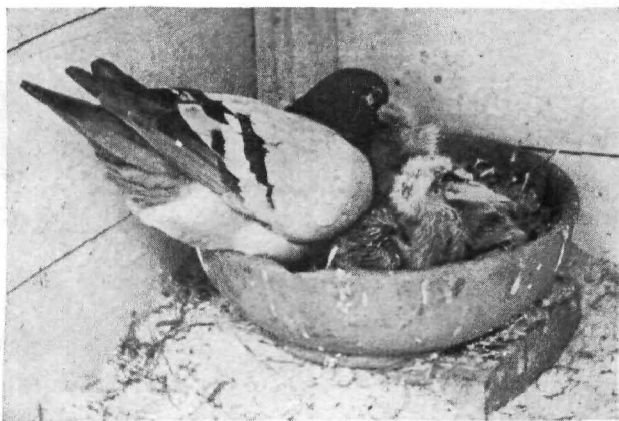
**3 MEALTIME FOR MUFF-TUMBLERS**

4 SQUABS HATCHING

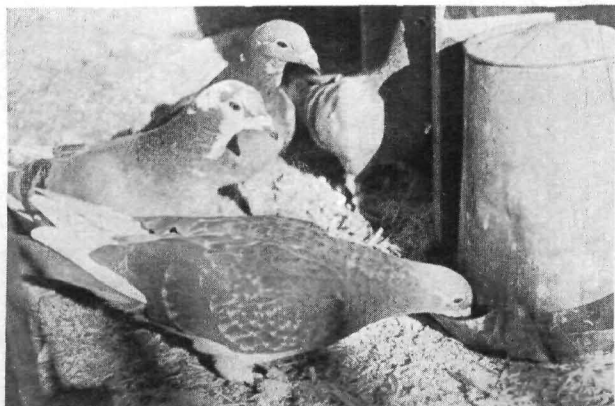
*At dark spot on egg, squab will break shell.*

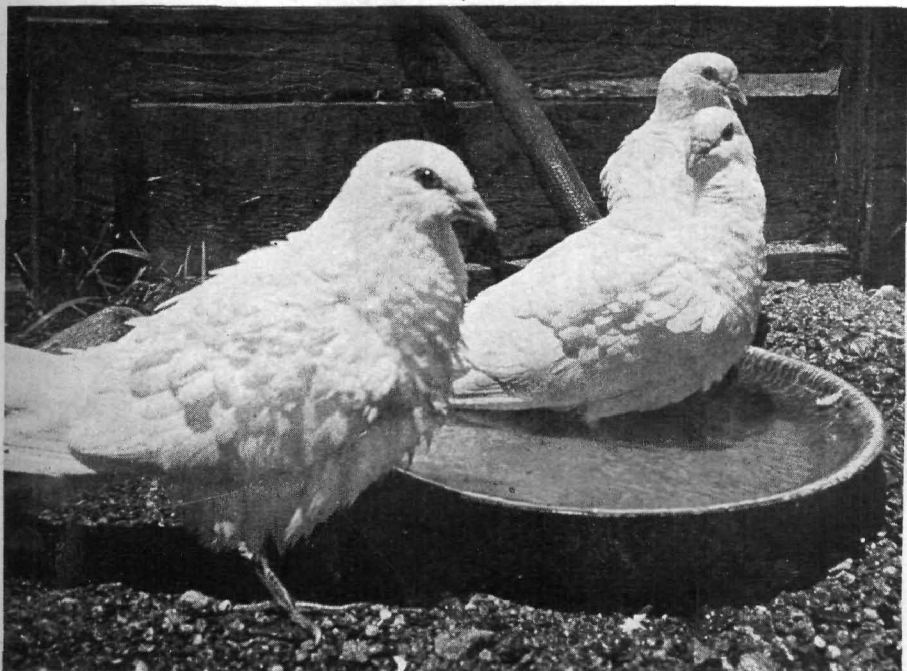


5 *Having taken youngster's bill into hers, hen homing pigeon proceeds to feed 14-day old squab by regurgitation.*

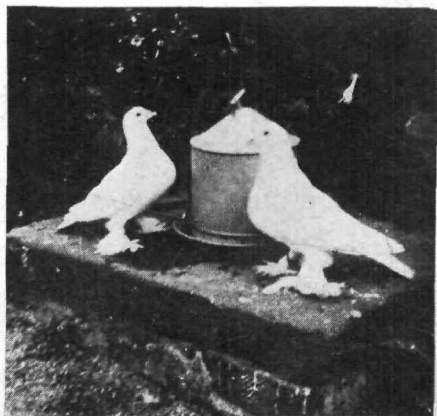


6 *Unlike many another bird, a pigeon drinks by inserting her beak into the water and drawing the liquid up in a continuous stream.*

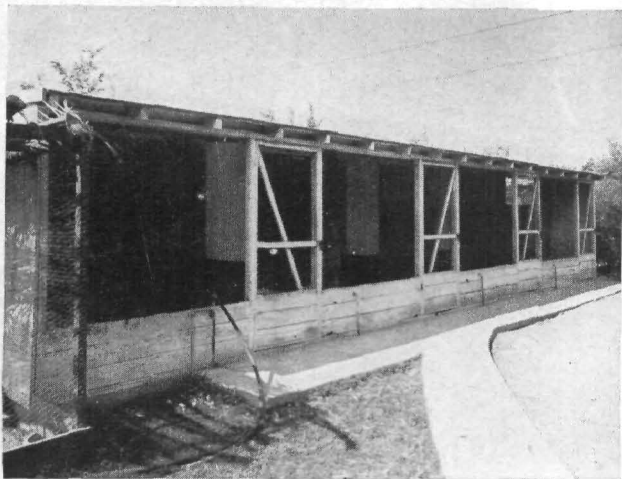




7 FREQUENT BATHING IS ESSENTIAL TO THE HEALTH OF PIGEONS

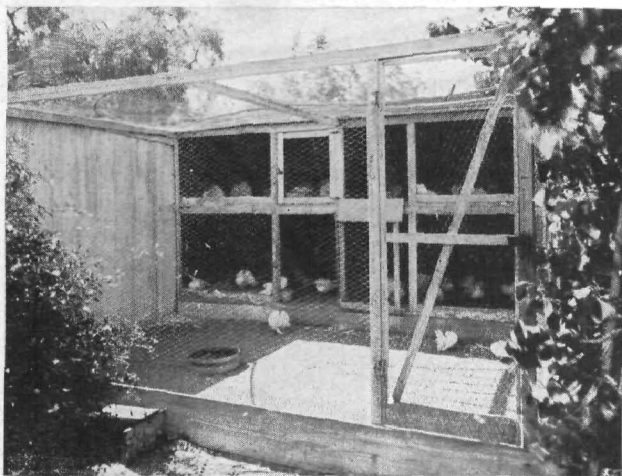


8 DUCHESS PIGEONS AT THE  
DRINKING FOUNTAIN



**9 GERALD CHAMP'S FANTAIL LOFT**

*Main Breeding Loft.*



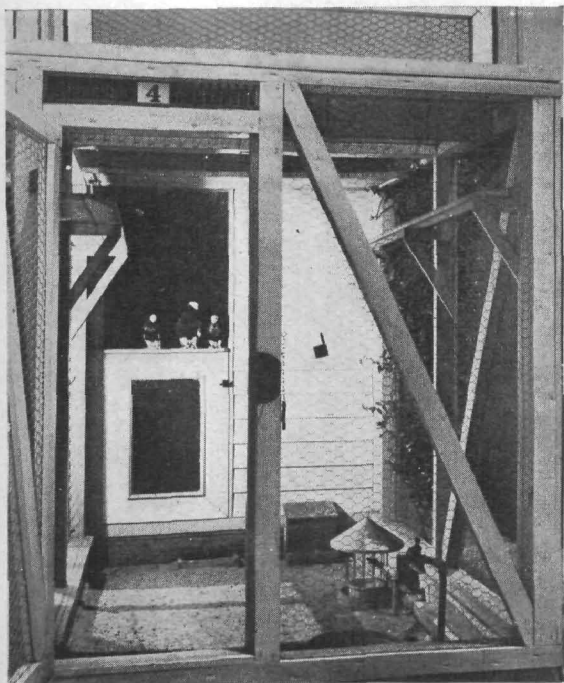
**10 GERALD CHAMP'S FANTAIL LOFT**

*Two floor Nursery.*



**11 GERALD CHAMP'S FANTAIL LOFT**

*Interior, showing boards nailed up for breeding.*



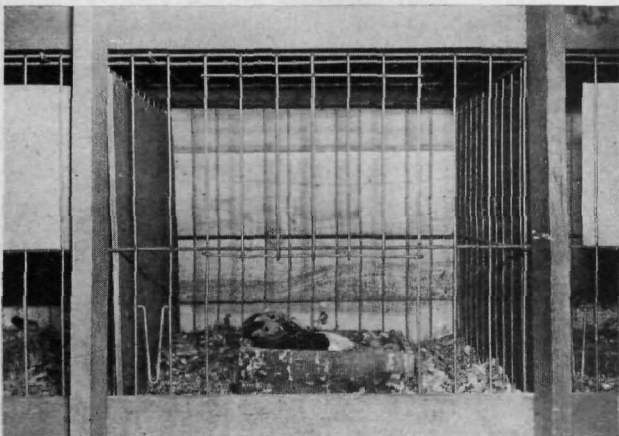
12 MR. H. R. STAFFORD'S MUFF-TUMBLER LOFT

*Front View.*



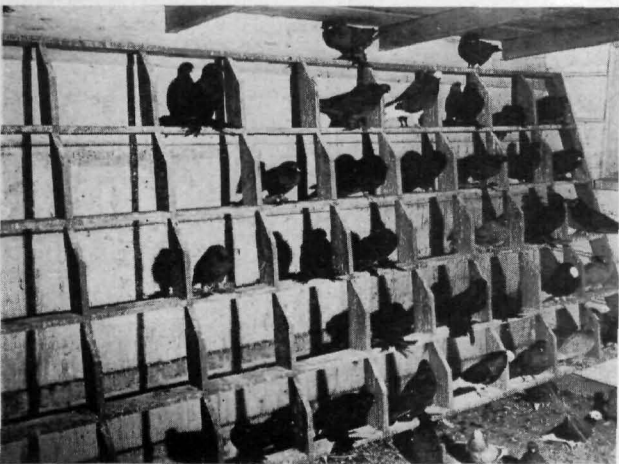
13 MR. H. R. STAFFORD'S MUFF-TUMBLER LOFT

*Interior View.*



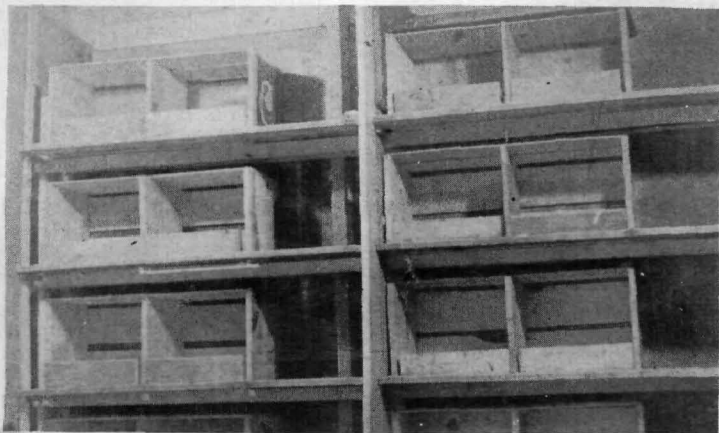
14 MR. H. R. STAFFORD'S  
MUFF-TUMBLER LOFT

*Nest-box arrangement.*



15 MR. H. R. STAFFORD'S  
MUFF-TUMBLER LOFT

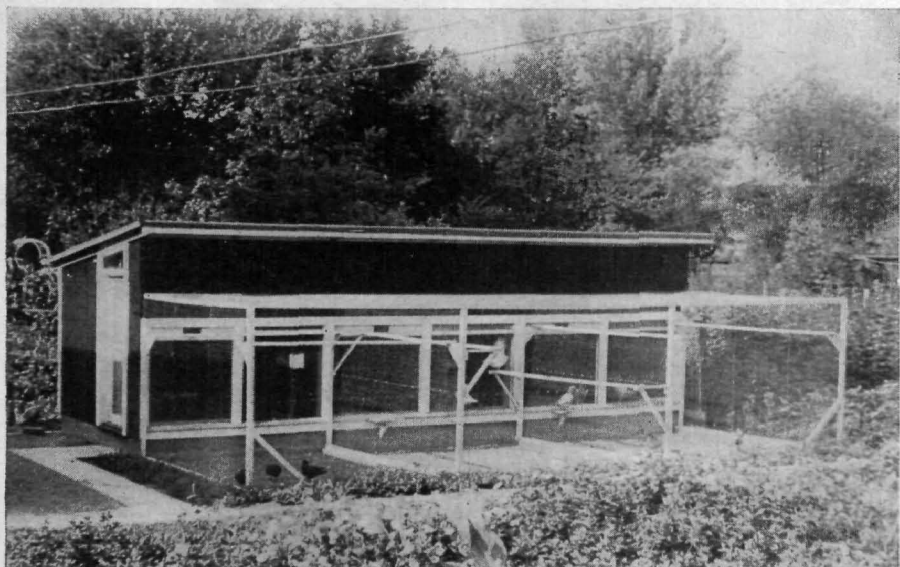
*Wall-perch in youngsters  
pen.*



16 MR. O. R. FRANZ'  
KING LOFT

*Nest-box arrange-  
ment.*



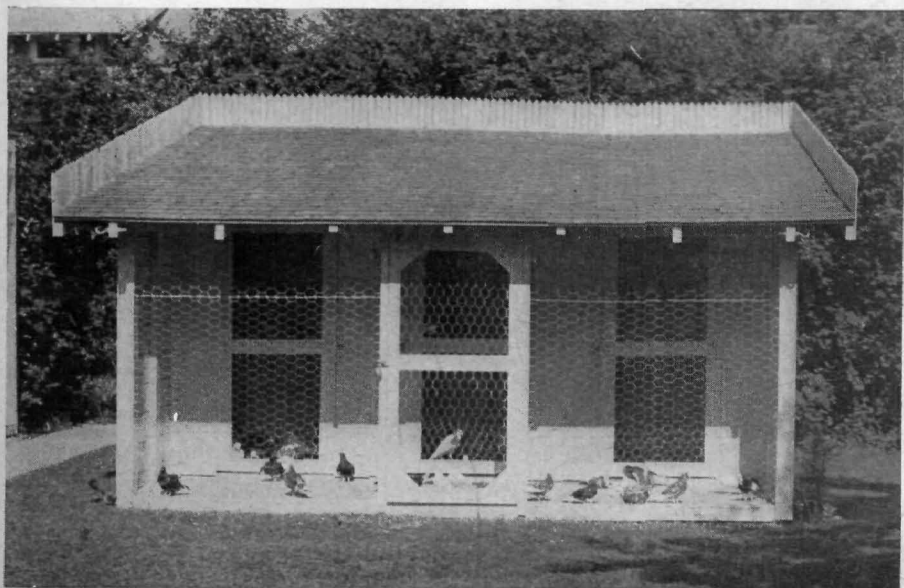


17 MR. O. R. FRANZ' KING LOFT

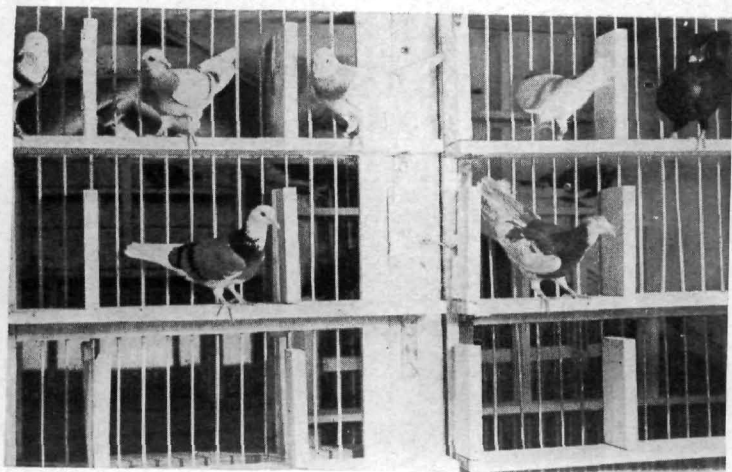
*Front view.*

18 MR. REUBEN R. GEORGE'S ROLLER LOFT

*Front view.*







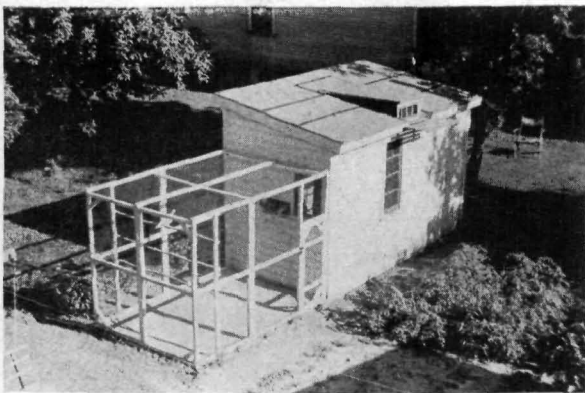
19 MR. REUBEN R. GEORGE'S ROLLER LOFT  
*Perches in breeding loft.*



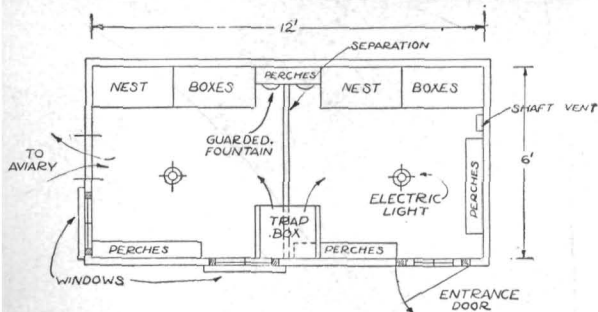
20 MR. REUBEN R. GEORGE'S ROLLER LOFT  
*Perches in flying loft.*



21 MR. REUBEN R. GEORGE'S ROLLER LOFT  
*Nests in breeding loft.*



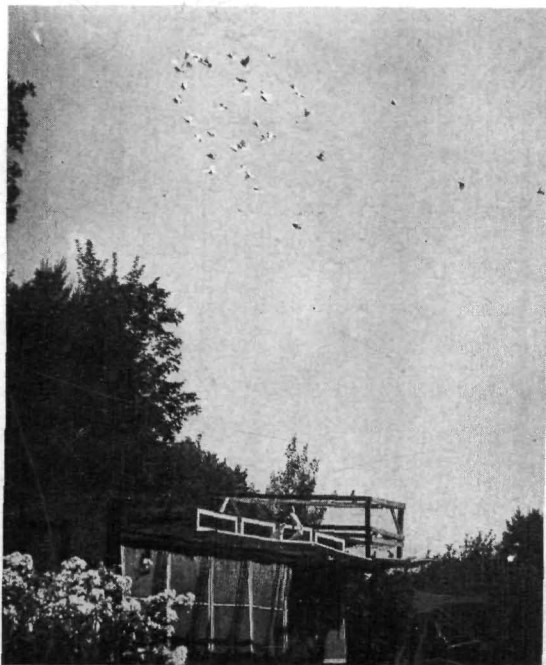
**22** LOFT OF JUNIOR RACING FAN-  
CIER, JAMES PRACKI

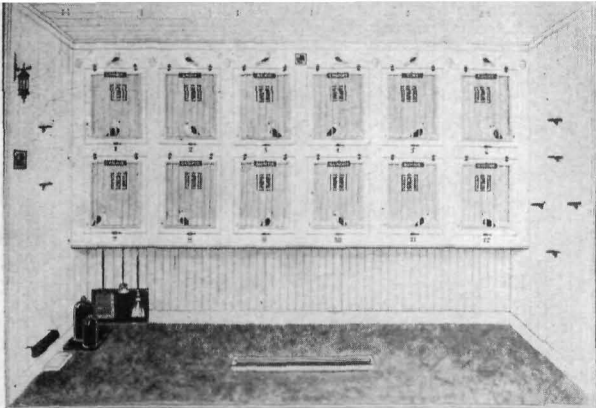


**22a** FLOOR PLAN OF MR. PRACKI'S  
RACING HOMER LOFT

**23** MR. R. L. PERKINS' FLYING LOFT

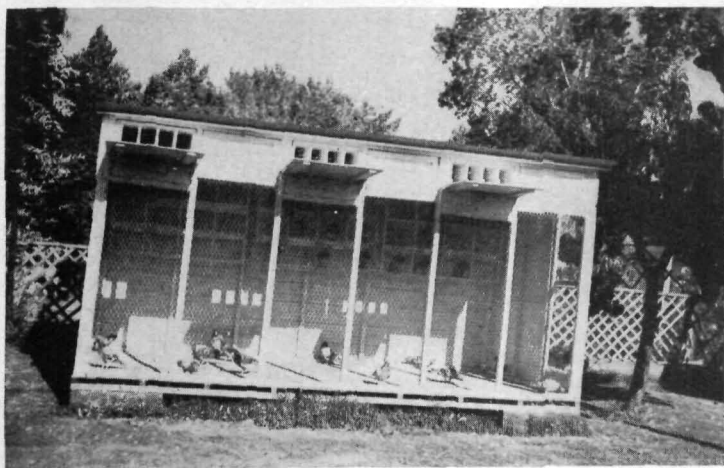
*Consisting of six compartments  
for six kits of Penson Rollers.*





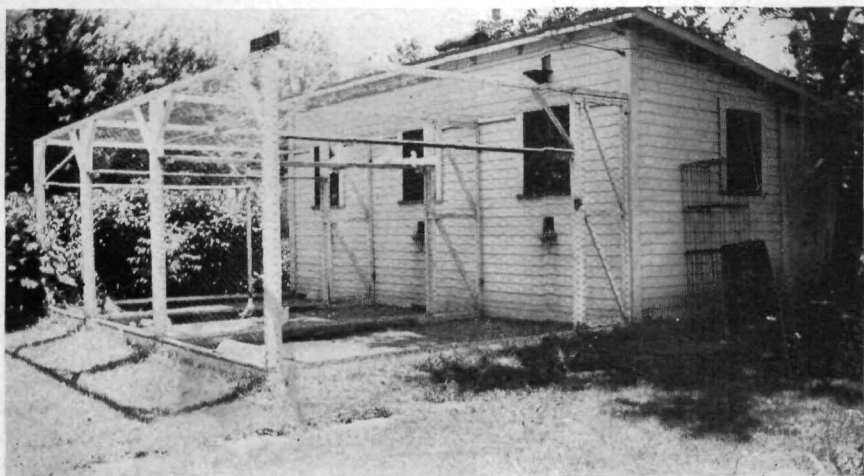
24 C. L. BROWN AND SON'S  
MODERN TURBIT LOFT

*Interior view.*



25 MR. U. L. IN-  
MAN'S RACING  
LOFT

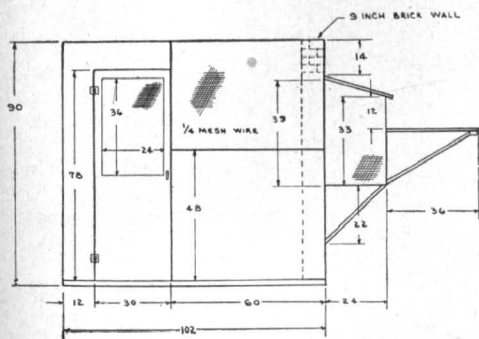
*(Three compart-  
ments equipped  
with 16 perches,  
each, six nests,  
running from  
the floor up to  
the perches.)*



26 MR. BOB CLINE'S THREE-COMPARTMENT LOFT

*Size of house as well as fly-pen is 18' x 10'.*

Scale Sketch of Racing Loft of Richard W. L. Miller, Cheltenham, Pa.  
*prepared by Mr. Miller*



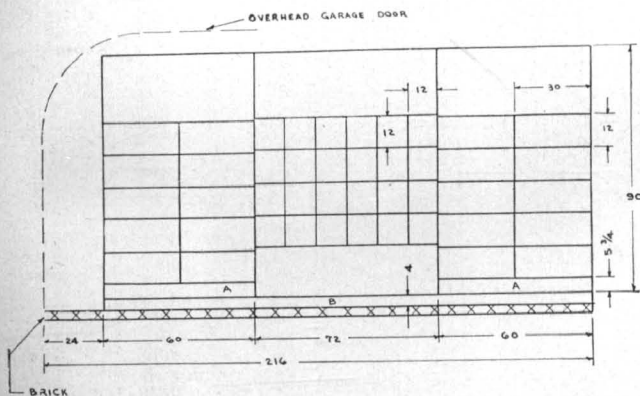
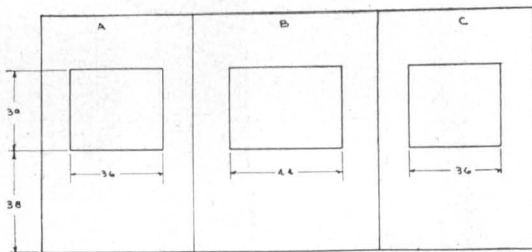
A

EXTERIOR END-VIEW

*Had the loft been built as a separate structure instead of forming part of the garage, it would have been placed about two to three feet above the ground. Moreover, the roof of the loft would have been sloped from back to front.*

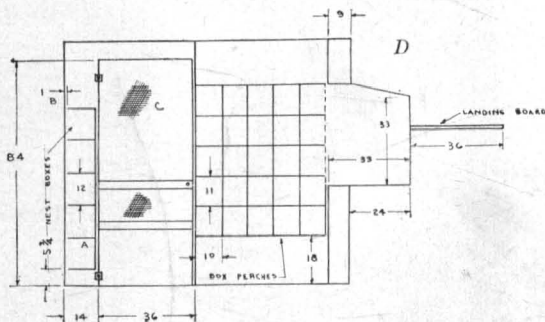


A. Section reserved for cock birds when not breeding. B. Section reserved for young flyers. C. Section reserved for hen birds when not breeding. A and C. These sections serve as breeding quarters during the breeding season.



INTERIOR VIEW OF BREEDERS' SIDE  
(END VIEW FACING CENTER)

A. Nest-boxes are 12" deep. Nest boxes 24" deep would enable fancier to mate selected birds in them, thus insuring pure-bred youngsters, in Mr. Miller's opinion. B. All nest-boxes and box-perches are approximately one inch away from the wall to insure droppings falling to floor when loft is being cleaned. C.  $\frac{1}{4}$ " mesh-wire for protection against mice and other vermin.



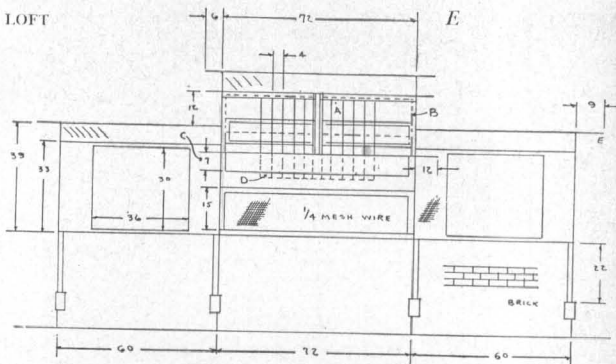
C

INTERIOR REAR-VIEW

A. Nest-boxes are  $5\frac{3}{4}$ " off the floor, so that youngsters may find protection under them when pursued by older birds. B. Wood floor is built 4" above brick floor and is sprinkled with fine sand to a depth of about two inches.

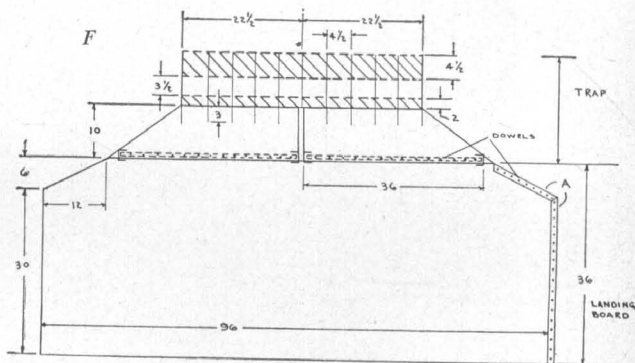
# FRONT VIEW OF TRAP AND LOFT

A. 10 stalls exactly 4" apart, divided into two sections of 5 stalls each—so that if two birds approach at one time or a few seconds apart, one may enter one side, with the sliding door closing; and the other bird will have available a section of 5 stalls open to trap him. B. Sliding door operated by a string run through screw eyes; it drops quietly behind the bird, and to a position two inches above landing board, thus not irritating high-strung racers. C. Door enabling fancier to remove countermark from bird's leg without handling bird at point. D. In any stall bird may enter. E. All roofs extend from 6" to 9" for drainage. F. Door for releasing birds in center section.



## TOP VIEW OF TRAP AND LANDING BOARD

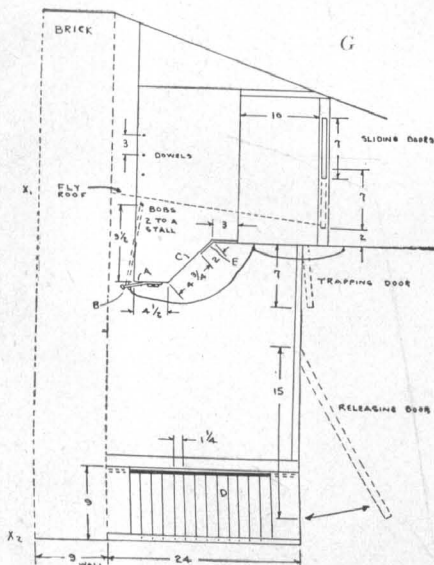
A. Dowel wall on side of landing board enables trapper standing at point B with small stick to urge bird gently into loft. This arrangement hastens trapping. Note that all angles of landing board and trap lead toward stalls and that a space of ten inches of landing board is used for trapping the bird before it enters the stalls.

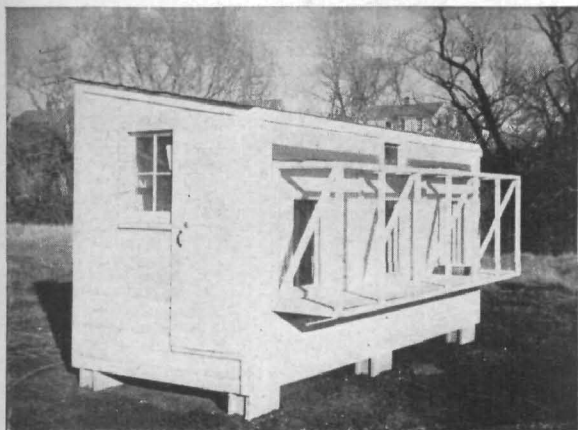


## G

## SIDE VIEW OF TRAP AND FLY

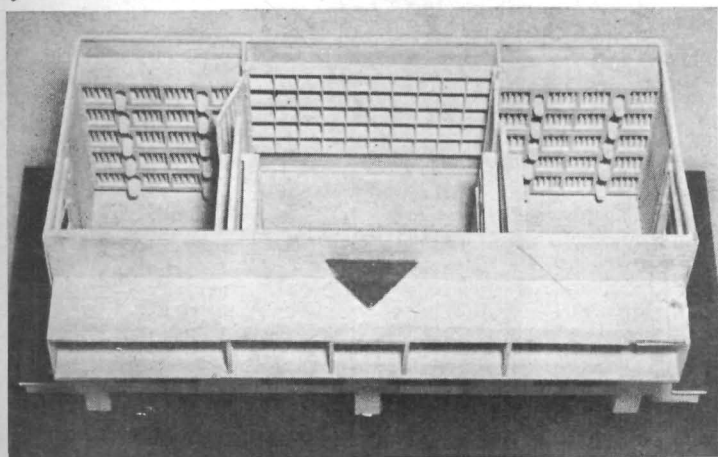
A. Board 4 1/2" high, on which bird stands after entering stall and just prior to pushing through bobs into loft. B. Spring latch arrangement for locking bobs on race-day so that bird cannot enter the loft until countermark has been removed by the trapper from his leg at point C from the outside of the loft. X<sub>1</sub> to X<sub>2</sub> can be enclosed by a wire-door in the center section when either cocks or hens are being flown. This arrangement prevents them from entering the center loft proper, prompting them to enter their own section by unlocking the bobs to it at point D. E. Two-inch board placed at angle to aid bird to drop down into stall. With this arrangement the bird will find it difficult to back out of stall. Moreover, the bird does not hesitate to enter stall.





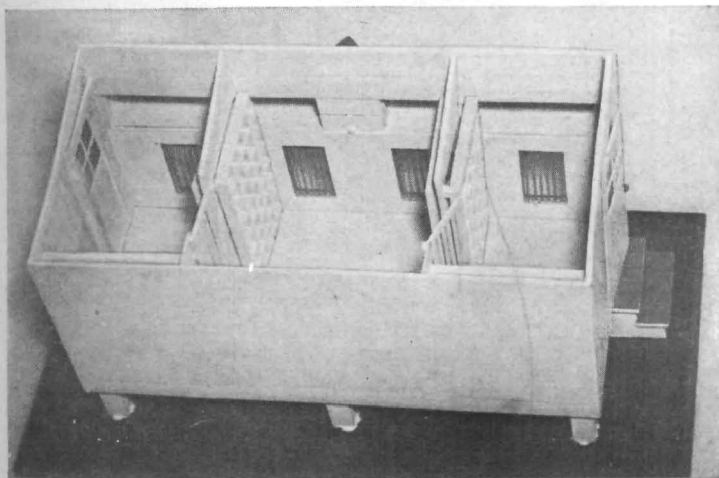
**27 MR. KEN BRUGGER'S RACING  
HOMER LOFT**

*Side view.*



**28 MR. RICH-  
ARD W. L. MIL-  
LER'S RACING  
HOMER LOFT  
(MODEL) FRONT  
VIEW**

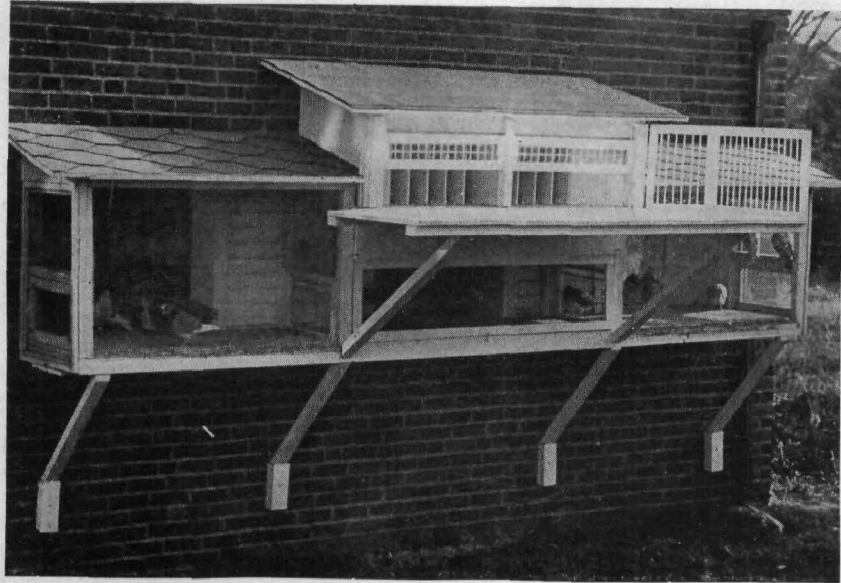
*Perching and  
nesting ar-  
rangements.*



**29 MR. RICH-  
ARD W. L. MIL-  
LER'S RACING  
HOMER LOFT**

*Back view of  
model.*



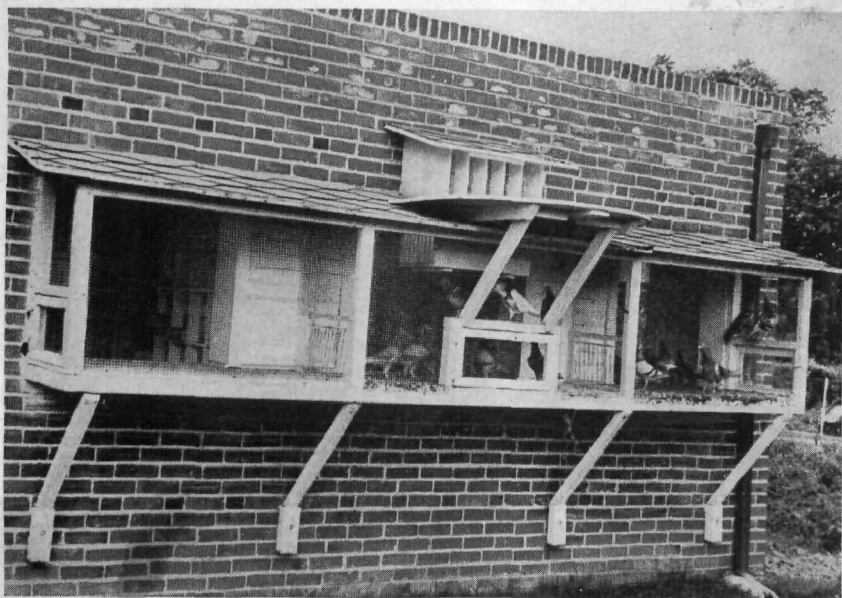


30 MR. RICHARD W. L. MILLER'S RACING HOMER LOFT

*Side view of trap and fly.*

31 MR. RICHARD W. L. MILLER'S RACING HOMER LOFT

*Front view*



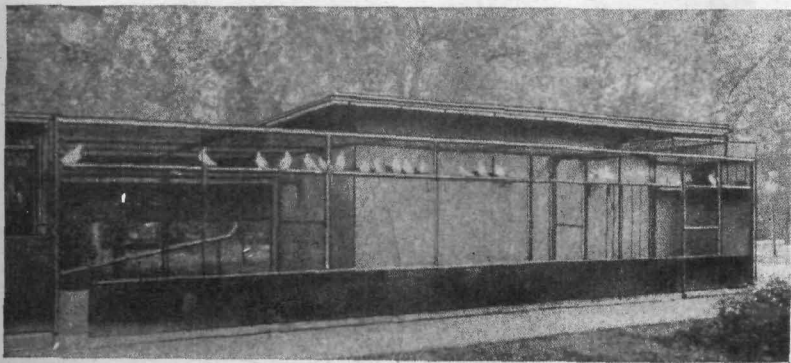


32 LOFT OF THE JOE W. ENGEL GRIZZLE STRAIN OF IMPORTED ENGLISH RACING HOMERS AT CHATTANOOGA, TENN.



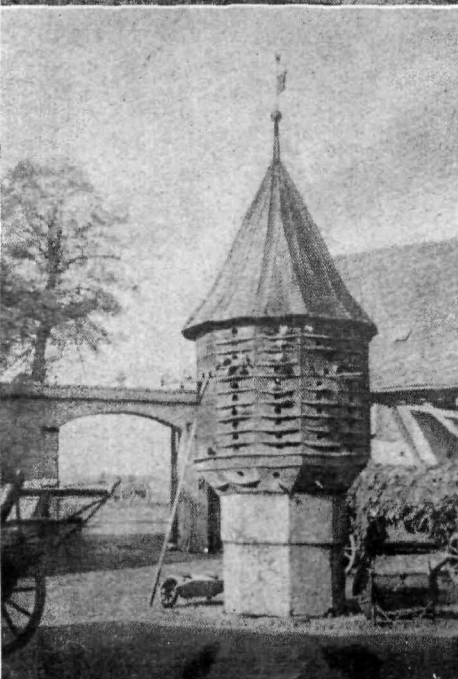
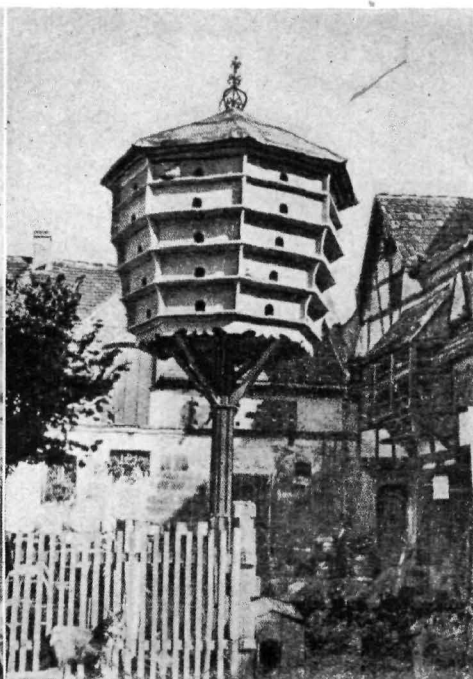
33 RACING LOFT OF MR. CHAS. HEITZMAN AT JEFFERSONTOWN, KY.

36 feet long and 14 feet wide. Divided into four compartments with a lobby in the center. The roof has three glass-fitted ventilators. All partitions are of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " wood-dowel construction. The front windows have metal frames glazed with plate-glass. Each compartment has a separate entrance, fitted with electrically equipped bobs.



34 RACING LOFT FOR RACING HOMERS





door leading to the front portion of the house. This part, which is 3' 4" deep and which has a cement floor, is equipped with a single center door.

Each of the three compartments has twenty-five individual, "open-box" perches, which appear only on one side-wall in order to minimize the birds' flying activities during confinement and to make them more eager to take to the air the moment they are released through the center door. The perches consist of shelves having numerous box-like partitions, each box (or perch) being 10 inches high, 12 inches wide, and 6 inches deep, and accommodating one bird comfortably. Being solely used for flyers, this loft contains no nests whatever.

A special feature of this interesting loft is the 10-inch picket fence protruding along three sides over the edges of the black composition roof. Its purpose is to prevent those young birds in training which are unable to fly, from falling over the edges and also to serve as an easily recognizable landmark for birds in the air.

Usually the young rollers are placed in the loft three days after they have left their nests. All birds are liberated through the center door, there being no trap of any kind. They are fed on the concrete floor, which, unlike the wooden floors, is not sprinkled with sand. Drinking water is left with the birds for three or four days after they have been transferred to this loft so that they may learn where to find it. Thereafter, however, the drinking fountain is left in the feeding pen only for about ten minutes after feeding. In winter the birds are given water once a day—after the flying and feeding; in spring and fall twice a day; and in summer three times a day.

#### A SMALL BUT DISTINCTIVE RACING HOMER LOFT

Junior Racing Fancier James Procki of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, provides comfortable accommodations for eight breeding pairs of racing homers and thirty odd youngsters in a loft 12 feet long, 6 feet wide, 8 feet high in the rear to 7 feet in front. There is an adjoining wire fly-pen 8 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 6 feet high. A readily removable two-piece partition made of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " pine laths, which may be quickly hooked into posi-

tion, halves the house, the half next to the fly-pen being reserved for breeders. (See picture 22 and sketch, 22a.)

The loft, painted glossy white, has a solid and level floor made of matched pine, which is set two inches above a ten-inch concrete foundation to allow for air space. It has cedar wall siding and a heavy tar-paper roof, which slopes one foot from rear to front to insure drainage and also a clear view of the trap from James's home. The trap made of aluminum bobs and placed in a small dormer window, is so constructed as to be separately accessible to birds housed in either half of the loft. This trap is 24 inches long, 24 inches wide, and 20 inches high; it has an outside alighting board 36 inches long and 50 inches wide.

To make the loft draft-proof, weather-stripping has been used on all windows, doors, and walls. Air circulation is furnished by means of two flat shaft-ventilators, one being installed in the top-center of the east wall and the other in the west wall below the small window. Light enters the loft through two windows; the one, size 18 inches by 46 inches, appears in the front-wall immediately below the trap; the other, size 20 inches by 25 inches, appears in the west wall. Each half of the loft is provided with an electric light bulb enclosed in a wire guard and fastened to connections projecting from the center of the ceiling. The wiring for the light is placed underground to prevent the birds from striking it.

Individual nest-boxes, made of pine, 30 inches long, 15 inches deep, and 15 inches high, equipped with dowel-fronts, each containing a wood-pulp nest-bowl, are fastened to the rear wall of the loft. Pine box perches, 11 inches high, 12 inches long, and 4 inches wide are nailed against the front and the side walls of the loft, set about two inches from the walls. The first perch is 28 inches off the floor. Two fountains, one in each pen, and protected from droppings of birds sitting above them, furnish the necessary drinking water. For bathing purposes, galvanized bath-pans, 20 inches long, 4 inches deep, and 20 inches wide are used.

The birds enter the fly-pen by means of an 8-inch by 16-inch opening, fitted with a window for use in winter, which has alighting boards 9 inches long at either end, placed at a height of 4 feet. For this pen, which is 8 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 6 feet high, 1" wire-mesh has been used to prevent sparrows

and rats from entering. A thick floor of gravel insures proper drainage. Three perches 6 feet long and 2 inches wide, and 1½ feet apart are placed along one side of the fly-pen. Both, loft and fly-pen have outside doors. The birds weather nicely in this loft summer and winter.

The approximate cost of this attractive and practical racing-homer loft, including materials and labor, was two hundred dollars.

### AN ATTRACTIVE, MEDIUM-SIZED EASTERN RACING LOFT

The racing homer loft of Mr. Richard W. L. Miller, Cheltenham, Pa., consists of a brick structure 18 feet long, 9 feet wide, and 8 feet high, with an outside aviary 3½ feet high and 2½ feet wide. All inside fittings, as well as ceiling and floor, are made of wood.

As may be seen from the photographs and drawings (Illustration numbers 28 to 31), the building is divided into three sections, the middle one accommodating fifty or more racers, and each end section ten pairs of breeders, or in the off-season the separate sexes. Half-inch mesh screen is used to make the loft mouse and rat-proof. All wood-work is painted white. The flooring is covered with sand to a depth of two inches. The bob control in the trap is such as to permit birds from any one of the three sections to leave and enter the loft separately.

This practical and attractive loft was built by Mr. Miller himself according to a model which he made to scale and which he later photographed.

### AN INTERESTING SMALL RACING LOFT

Ken Brugger of Kenosha, Wisconsin, uses the loft (Illustration number 27) to house a small flock of high-quality racers. The loft, painted white inside and out, is 15' long, 6' wide, 6' high in front and 7' in the rear. There are three pens of equal size and an outside exercise aviary with a lath-floor that rarely needs cleaning. The loft has a double floor for dryness and for warmth, the upper one being of maple-wood—easy to keep clean. In the rear of each partition are the removable nest-

boxes. Above the end-windows appear cabinets in which records, bands, and other loft supplies are kept. A special feeding tray runs the width of the second pen and extends into the other two pens, as do also the water-trays near the feeding board.

### INTERIOR OF MODERN TURBIT LOFT

The rear wall and individual cages of the Modern Turbit Loft belonging to C. L. Brown & Son, Toronto, Canada, are shown in photograph No. 24. This loft, which is nine feet long, five and a half feet wide, seven and a half feet high in front, and six and a-half feet high in the rear, is constructed of double, one-inch matched lumber. All seams are faced with half-round. The entire structure is enameled pure white to facilitate cleaning. The cage doors are wooden, hand-dowelled. Each cage is equipped with aluminum feed and water cups, placed in rust-resisting, nickel-plated ring-holders to prevent spilling. The cages are convertible in that the center division may be swung to the left, providing double space and privacy for birds in the nest-bowls. Photographs and names of the respective birds appear in each cage for ready identification. All hardware is of black wrought-iron. Wooden perches are ducoed black, which is washable. The feed trough on the floor has a rotary top to prevent the birds from walking on and soiling the feed. An earthenware water container keeps the water cool always. The loft is equipped with electric light.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Home at Any Cost*

**A**T FIVE O'CLOCK ON JULY 4, 1930, RACING HOMER B.C.H. 27 MCCA 516, a true champion, was tossed into the air at Havana, Cuba. Five days later, before noon of July 9, she arrived at her loft in Baltimore, Maryland, having flown a distance of thirteen hundred miles. With several other birds, "Miss 1303," blue-blooded racer bred at Elmont, Long Island, near New York City, was sold to a mining engineer at Caracas, Venezuela, in February 1930 to be used for breeding purposes. In May she escaped from her new loft. In August of the following year she was back at her home loft, hale and hearty, having flown three thousand odd miles—perhaps the longest pigeon flight on record. Many other, similar cases of more or less phenomenal flights might be cited. What impulse drove these game flyers to brave hot winds, wide waters, ominously spiralling hawks and buzzards, and the hunger, thirst, and weariness inevitably consequent to prolonged flight?

Many animals, especially those endowed with keen eyesight, travel far to get back to the place they know as home. You and I have repeatedly read of dogs and cats which have trudged hundreds upon hundreds of wearying miles through strange country to reach the haven of home, emaciated and footsore, but at last content. Many varieties of birds have a deep attachment to the territory in which they breed, returning to it season after season. Famous for the promptness with which they come back regularly on the nineteenth of March to nest under the ancient rafters of the old mission and leave on the twenty-third of October are the swallows of San Juan Capistrano, California. No scientist has yet offered a satisfactory explanation for this astounding exhibition of a sense of time. Starlings, warblers, thrushes, nightingales, and dozens of other kinds of birds, as we know unmistakably from their carefully numbered legbands, wing their arduous way in spring for thousands of miles irresistibly back to the old familiar haunts

where they are wont to nest. In "Adventures Among Birds," W. H. Hudson tells of experiments in Scotland made by Sir John Sinclair and others in the North of England who procured nightingales' eggs and placed them in robins' nests. The young were hatched and safely reared, but departed in the autumn never to return. We can only assume that the inherited memory of its true home, which was not in Scotland or Yorkshire, but where the egg was laid, was in every bird's brain from the shell, that if it ever survived to return from its far journey, it came faithfully back to the very spot where the egg had been taken.

That the intense yearning of pigeons for the home loft was widely utilized by man for his pleasure and his profit, especially prior to the advent of the railroad, the telephone, and the telegraph, is not surprising when you consider the painfully slow and laborious means of communication and transportation then most commonly available. Early in human history the pigeon became a carrier of news.

Whenever the ancient Egyptians sailed on long voyages, they always carried with them pigeons, which upon their return and long before their vessels touched the native shores, they would release in order to announce their impending arrival. Scout ships of other maritime nations used pigeons to warn the people on shore of the imminent arrival of enemy vessels.

In the days of the Olympic festivals in Greece, as related approximately 560 B.C. by the famous poet Anacreon in his "Ode to the Carrier Pigeon," each district or province entering athletes in the races brought along pigeons, which might swiftly and surely carry messages of victory home to their friends and relatives in the distant provinces. The Romans, likewise, made use of pigeons, especially to deliver important dispatches in times of war. When General Antonius (Mark Antony) laid siege to Mutina (now Modena), held by the forces of Decius Brutus, Brutus communicated with the consuls by means of pigeons, which carried letters tied to their legs.

In 1146 the first regular pigeon post was established by the Sultan Nurreddin, Khalif of Bagdad. He placed postmasters in charge of the various districts, with all of which, as well as with Egypt and Syria, he thus kept in more or less constant

communication. Even more elaborate and efficient pigeon post service was maintained by the Khalif Achmed at the end of the twelfth century which, together with the thirteenth, witnessed the greatest popularity of the pigeon post in the Orient. At that time proved flyers commanded prices as high as one thousand and fifteen hundred dollars apiece!

In Europe the pigeon post was used as early as 1573. The birds were used mainly for carrying information relating to the winners in lotteries, horse races, and other, similar affairs. Nathan Rothschild of London added immeasurably to his family's wealth by equipping, so to speak, with homing pigeons each of his agents who followed the armies of Napoleon I. Thus the news of each victory or defeat was transmitted to the shrewd London speculator many hours before any of his business rivals were able to obtain the portentous intelligence. Later the leading banking houses of Paris, Brussels, and London relied on homing pigeons to keep them informed of fluctuations in the stock and money markets at strategic European centers. Pigeons so used were called "exchange" pigeons (*Kurs-tauben*). In the wars of the Netherlands, 1572 to 1573, William the Silent used many homing pigeons to carry messages, especially during the siege of Haarlem. In 1849 Reuter built a telegraph line between Berlin and Aix-la-Chapelle, but none from Aix-la-Chapelle to Brussels. To bridge this gap, a pigeon messenger service was established, each message being carried by three birds. Not only was this service satisfactory, but it was instrumental in establishing the reputation of the Reuter Telegraph Company.

In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the beleaguered city of Paris kept in communication with the provinces almost solely through the medium of pigeons, by which more than 115,000 messages were sent to and from the city. The birds were taken out from Paris in free balloons. By means of microphotographs printed on films of collodion, military despatches, private messages, and even newspapers were transmitted to and from Paris. So reduced in size were the letters by this ingenious process that a single pigeon was frequently able to carry as many as thirty thousand words at one time. When the bird reached its destination, the films were enlarged by photography and the messages became legible.

In 1897, a commercial pigeon post was established by the



Great Barrier Pigeongram Service between the Great Barrier Islands and Auckland in the Antipodes, a distance of sixty-five miles. This service was successfully and uninterruptedly operated until 1908, when it was replaced by a government cable service. In July 1905 the *Paris Matin* organized the "Pigeon Post," by which birds were released from the ship "Atiane" at anchor not far from the English resort of Penguine. The messages carried, all written on tissue paper, were upon arrival of the birds placed in small envelopes and affixed to special souvenir cards.

In the first world war the racing homer made a record no less illustrious than that of many another military unit. Practically every mission on which these fearless messengers were dispatched was one of life or death: so many unprotected birds fearlessly winging their way aloft frequently in the face of severe enemy fire, with but one determination—to reach the home loft as speedily as possible.

Immediately following the outbreak of the great conflict, the French mobilized the homing pigeons made available by government and private lofts in Northern France and elsewhere. Moreover, they were the first nation to utilize *mobile* lofts, built like two-wheel auto trailers, invented and perfected by one of their officers, M. Renaud. These lofts constituted a tremendous forward step in the use of homing pigeons for war purposes, widening decidedly the range of their usefulness. The new lofts simply meant that the birds could be moved to certain strategic positions where they were most needed; incidentally their successful use proved the ready adaptability of homing pigeons to changing locations.

One of the most common services which the French homing pigeons performed early in the war was spying in the territory occupied by the enemy. For this purpose small gas-balloons, equipped among other things with alarm clocks and several small baskets each containing one pigeon, were released, preferably on moonlit nights between midnight and early morning. Each clock was set to go off when the balloon had travelled the estimated distance, at which time the alarm mechanism would slowly unwind the string which held the pigeon baskets and so release them gradually. Usually the little pigeon baskets dropped to the ground at different spots. Some of these balloons were marked, "German Balloon. May be destroyed!"

Each pigeon so dispatched carried an aluminum capsule containing in addition to a pencil and a questionnaire, specific instructions for filling the latter out and also for releasing the pigeon.

The Belgians, English, and Germans also used pigeons for espionage duty with good success. When the Germans marched through Belgium, they were subjected to frequent surprise attacks by the Belgians who had received advance information of the enemy's exact position by means of pigeons carrying carefully marked photomicroscopic maps.

When in the first world war all telephone lines were destroyed during an attack and when the wireless refused to function, making communication over any distance with other fighting units or the next higher command impossible, homing pigeons, constituting the last means of communication, saved the situation. For it must be remembered that these feathered messengers are not conscious of the enemy, are not afraid of his fire, and may be pressed into front-line service immediately they are available, and without special preparation.

As the infantry advanced, pigeons were often dispatched behind the lines to keep the command informed of the exact location of the various units, so that supporting artillery fire might be directed more accurately. In the great Meuse-Argonne offensive, the American army used 442 pigeons, trained on very short notice. Flying distances between twenty and fifty kilometers, these birds delivered 403 important messages. Approximately only ten per cent of these birds were lost and no important message went astray. Among the outstanding flyers in this drive was "Big Tom." Released at Grand Pre at 2:35 P.M. and braving heavy machine-gun and artillery fire, this bird flew 40 km. in twenty-five minutes to deliver a significant message. His feat is the more remarkable since the bird arrived with one leg shot to pieces and his breast pierced by a machine-gun bullet. Fortunately, the message tube which dangled by the ligaments of the torn leg was not damaged.

According to information supplied by the Chief Signal Officer of the U. S. Army,\* pigeons were first used extensively by the American forces in the Aisne-Marne attack. A mobile loft with seventy-two birds saw action near the front line, receiving between August 29 and September 11, seventy-eight im-

\* See *Signal Corps Bulletin* Nos. 24 and 30.

portant messages and 148 test messages without losing a single bird. During the battle of St. Mihiel, 202 pigeons, whose training had been brief and who were forced to fly in rain and fog, were assigned to tanks. Of these, twenty-four were lost or killed in action, the main cause being inexperienced handling and prolonged incarceration in small assault baskets. All messages were delivered, since each was carried by several birds, some of which averaged, despite very bad weather conditions, a speed of a *kilometer* (five eighths of a mile) a minute.

The same authority maintains that pigeon communication in war should be used only for special service, as for a reconnaissance mission dispatched by the headquarters of an army, which has had sufficient time to establish proper lofts. If pigeon communication is required by a front-line unit and its next superior command, the pigeons should be assigned to the former units. Altogether the United States used approximately 20,000 pigeons in the war, the allies 300,000, and the central powers 120,000, the personnel required to handle them efficiently numbering 800, 5000, and 3000, respectively.

Among the American homing pigeons which rendered heroic service during the world war, were, in addition to "Big Tom" already mentioned, "Spike," "President Wilson," "Mocker," and "Cher Ami." "Spike," born in France in 1916, carried fifty-two messages for the 77th Division from the front lines without being injured. He reached an age of seventeen. "President Wilson," a powerful and fast flyer, was first used by the tank corps and later in the Meuse-Argonne sector. Though forced to fly through dense fog and having one of his legs shot off, this bird delivered an important message. Following the war he was kept at Fort Monmouth until his death in 1929, when he was mounted and placed in the National Museum at Washington, D. C. "Mocker" became famous when he carried a highly significant message from the Beaumont front on September 12, 1918, giving the location of several heavy enemy batteries which had wrought much destruction among the advancing Americans. Within twenty minutes after the brave bird's arrival—he lost an eye during this flight—the enemy guns were silenced. Last of the famous wartime homers, "Mocker," the hero, died June 14, 1937, at Fort Monmouth at the ripe age of twenty, and was given military honors. After

being mounted, he was sent to the National Museum to join his feathered buddies.

Of "Cher Ami," Allen Macdonald wrote in the *N. Y. World* in part as follows:

On the morning of October 2, 1918, a general advance was ordered in the Argonne. The 77th Division was directed to take and hold certain forward positions, regardless of cost or loss. The objectives were fixed and the word was given. Late that afternoon, six companies of the 306th, one of the 307th, and two machine-gun companies of the 305th, under Major Whittlesey, reached their objective, dug in, and threw out advance listening posts. The next morning they awoke to find that the forces on both their flanks had been driven back and that they were surrounded by the Germans, with their communications cut off entirely. Here were 554 men with only one day's rations.

In the storm of German fire and the barrage of the American artillery which swept back and forth across their location, they lost twenty-five per cent of their men the first day. There was neither surgeon nor medical officer with them, and only two first-aid men. Volunteer after volunteer started through the enemy lines only to be killed or captured. One by one the little force sent out six of its seven homing pigeons, only to see most of them picked off by German marksmen. Hourly the slaughter went on.

By the third day the American artillery was working terrible havoc on this lost battalion of its own army. There was but one pigeon left, and that was "Cher Ami." The officers of the battalion wrote this message, "For God's sake, lift the fire!", added the little force's location, and put the scrap of paper in the aluminum carrier of the pigeon's leg. Then they released their last bird and final hope in that deathridden air.

"Cher Ami" took off like a shot. The soldiers watched breathlessly. The bird was hit. They saw the valiant flyer falter and plunge to the ground. What they thought, no man can write! But the bird was up again—up and away! Some voice had called, so it seemed, "Cher Ami, come home!" and the bird responded.

A short time later "Cher Ami" fluttered down on the roof of the pigeon loft at Rampont, little more than a blood-smeared ball of feathers. One of his wings was shot through, one leg was gone—he carried the message dangling from its ligaments. But he had saved the Lost Battalion, or what remained of it. For the Americans advanced and succeeded in bringing back 194 of Major Whittlesey's command.

When the transport "Ohioan" brought "Cher Ami" back to Amer-

ica on April 16, 1919, his wounds more or less healed, not only did General Pershing hold him in his hand before the ship sailed, but he ordered that the Argonne hero should be lodged in a pigeon officer's cabin en route. At home, every one wanted to see "Cher Ami." To cap the climax, "Cher Ami" was kept in Washington as the mascot of the Signal Corps. When he died in 1919, he was mounted and placed on display in the National Museum in Washington.

A few years ago I read of a military funeral being given to "Colonel Fearless," British wartime homing pigeon, a rather small bird famous for having made successful flights through heavy enemy fire, especially at night. During the Somme engagement, "Colonel Fearless" carried a message which saved the British artillery in that sector. Because the bird lost an eye on that terrible day, he was sent back to England, where he died in 1935. It is hardly needful to cite further instances to prove the wartime bravery and usefulness of homing pigeons, whose exploits brought joy and pride to the hearts of racing pigeon men throughout the world.

All the peace and wartime services cited were rendered by a breed called messenger, carrier, or homing pigeon, the product of crossing among a number of long and high-flying racers, including, among others, the carrier, the cumulet, the owl, and the tumbler. About 1700 the Belgians began to refine this mixture through purposeful breeding based on painstaking selection of only the fittest specimens. Their patient efforts to produce not only a swift and powerful flyer but above all a bird possessing in large measure endurance and intelligence resulted gradually in the development of the Belgian racing homer, than which even today there is no finer racing blood in pigeondom. The racing of pigeons became a national sport in Belgium in 1732 with the holding of a three-mile race, which the birds covered in two and a half hours' time. Today's racing homer, bred for speed and stamina in the two hundred intervening years, would under reasonably favorable weather conditions cover the same distance in from five to seven minutes!

But you ask: Exactly what is it that prompts a pigeon to return to the home loft immediately after it is tossed into the air? Why does it not alight at the first likely looking loft en route and rest up for an hour or two before continuing the

strenuous flight homeward? Just what is it that makes the bird race through the air for home at a speed of from thirty to sixty and more miles an hour? All of which are very obvious questions, often asked, but seldom satisfactorily answered. To the first, most pigeon lovers would reply: largely instinct strengthened for generations by breeding only birds in which the instinct is very strong. But, you persist, how does a pigeon know in what direction the home loft lies, especially when it must fly over territory it has never before seen? It will be remembered that Noah took two pigeons with him on the ark and never bothered about a compass.

If you are at all conversant with pigeon lore, you have no doubt heard of the various theories which have been advanced from time to time in explanation of the pigeon's seemingly uncanny ability to find its home loft, though the distance to it be a hundred or even a thousand miles. Many racing fanciers maintain that it is the sun which guides their birds' swift flight homeward. In proof of their contention they cite the rather heavy losses among pigeons flown on cloudy, rainy, or snowy days. When the sun is hidden behind clouds as it is sometimes for days, many racing pigeons seem to lose their sense of direction, become confused, and in the parlance of the racing fancier "crash." A few of the very best, flying comparatively low, will pick their way slowly and probably by familiar landmarks and perhaps reach home. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the best speed made during a race held in cloudy weather between Montargis and Brussels, a distance of two hundred seventy miles, was but a trifle over thirty miles an hour, whereas the top speed made by practically the same racers on a bright, sunny day the following year was eighty-three miles an hour. Similar instances which indicate the tremendous influence of the sun or the lack of sun on pigeons' racing ability, can be multiplied many times. Attempts to train pigeons for night flying have shown that the birds invariably do badly on very dark or very foggy nights, and that even on bright nights, they are severely handicapped, homing successfully only over short distances.

Some American pigeon fanciers maintain that the homing pigeon not only responds readily to the electrified air lanes but that it actually tunes in on those leading to its home loft. In fairly recent, though not very extensive, experiments it was

found that the majority of pigeons released during broadcasting hours in the immediate vicinity of radio stations were either lost or else returned home after disappointingly long absences. Instead of circling a few times when tossed, many of the birds would fly round and round for many minutes only to head off in the wrong direction, showing clearly that they were utterly confused. This happened despite the ideal weather conditions prevailing at the time of tossing. Pigeons crossing the magnetic field produced by a broadcasting station are said to lose contact with the home loft. Some, however, cross this zone, which is from three to five hundred yards wide, safely. It is an old-established fact that homing pigeons encounter serious difficulty in orienting themselves during severe electric storms when many of them drop to the ground. However, to substantiate the theory that the homing pigeon reacts to electrified air lanes, more well-planned and extensive experiments are needed.

One prominent fancier in this country adheres to what he terms the sense-of-smell theory. He maintains that the birds, not unlike dogs, literally smell their way home, in proof of which theory he has stuffed the nostrils of many of the racers with cotton before releasing them. Invariably such birds have failed to come back to his loft. However, this theory is discredited by the experiments of the American scientists Watson and Lashley\* with sooty terns, which returned promptly to their distant nesting sites, even though their nostrils were sealed with wax which in turn was coated with asphalt.

Perhaps the most widely accepted, though not conclusive, explanation of the pigeon's ability to home at great distances, and certainly the one having the most generous support of American fanciers, simply and quite naturally ascribes this impulse to an exceptionally sharp sense of sight aided by a dependable memory and intelligent training, and heightened by rigidly selective breeding. There is no gainsaying the fact that the homing pigeon possesses very keen eyesight which enables it to espy a hawk or other bird in the air long before a human being does. As a matter of fact, the eye of the racing pigeon is a highly complex organ provided with six different muscles so as to afford the greatest possible mobility in every direction.

\* See also "The Homing of Birds," by Ernst Mayr in *Bird-Lore* 39:5-13.

In addition to the ordinary or opaque eyelid, there is another, called the "blinker." The moment a pigeon ascends into the air for continued flight, it closes this special, transparent lid, which is designed to protect the eyeball proper from dust and other foreign matter in the air. The action of the "blinker" is so swift that you cannot detect it unless you observe the eye very closely. By means of a special focusing muscle, which controls the dilation and contraction of the pupil, often popularly called "the circle of adaptation," the pigeon can adjust its eye to short or long distances quickly.

The large extent to which homing pigeons depend on their sense of sight is shown by experiments made with blindfolded birds at Brooks Field, Texas, which indicated that when pigeons can no longer see, as in a dense fog or on a very dark day, they simply drop to the ground in self-protection. In other words, the homing instinct tends in all probability to function in conjunction with the sense of sight. Or, as my friend Dr. George Francis Richardson puts it: "Perhaps the birds 'know' the direction of home, but dare not risk the presence of obstructions which they cannot see, or they may be simply confused by the lack of sight and could perhaps be trained to 'fly it blind.'" In the experiments just mentioned, conducted by army authorities, the blind-folded bird was taken to an altitude of a thousand feet and then released. For less than a minute following its release, the pigeon fluttered, spun, and sideslipped helplessly in the air only suddenly to stop all efforts at flying and stretch its wings upward, floating to the ground like a parachute and reaching it uninjured.

Even though the racing pigeon is endowed with a remarkably well developed sense of sight, enabling it to spot quickly and accurately even relatively small familiar landmarks at distances of many miles, as for instance the small moveable army lofts used during the world war, whose location was often changed following the birds' release, yet keen eyesight does not explain fully how a racing homer finds its way in territory over which it has never before flown.

It is a well-known fact that in training their birds for races many pigeon men "jump" them fifty or a hundred miles at a time, after they have become familiar with the surroundings and direction of their home loft within a radius of from five to ten or fifteen miles. Such "jumping" always makes it necessary



for the bird to fly over many miles of entirely new territory. Moreover, there is ample proof of racing homers having been transferred to far-distant parts of the country or even to foreign countries, which upon escaping flew straight home, braving lofty mountains and uncertain seas wholly strange to them; also there is ample proof of completely untrained birds reaching home promptly. Pertinent to this whole discussion are the comprehensive experiments by Watson and Lashley, already mentioned, with noddies and sooty terns, which seabirds have a remarkable homing faculty—apparently superior to that of pigeons. For, even though these birds were released at distances ranging from 418 to 855 miles from their nesting places and forced to fly over territory they had never before seen, they yet returned home.

Undoubtedly experience is a salient factor in guiding a domestic pigeon homeward. Being perhaps one of the most teachable pigeons bred today, the racing homer benefits greatly from experience. Not infrequently you will find specimens endowed with apparently extraordinary memories. Mr. George Hauer, then secretary of the Independent Pigeon Racing Association of Oswego, New York, at one time sent a string of his best birds to compete in a race from Youngstown, Ohio, to Rochester, New York. From this race all his birds returned safely but one, which Mr. Hauer gave up as lost. Fully three years later, to his never-to-be-forgotten surprise, he found the "lost" flyer in his loft in the best of condition and still bearing the brass countermark with its racing number. A countermark on the other leg proved that an interim possessor had also been racing the bird. A remarkable pigeon, you will agree, that will return to the home loft after an absence of three years.

According to Renaud, French authority, "the instinct of distant orientation is the ability of birds to retrace the way on which they have come." He assumes that the bird has such a keen memory that it can remember all salient points along the route on which he is taken to the release station: not only the various turns and straight portions of the route, but also their respective lengths and the sequences in which they occur! Werner Rüppell,\* who experimented with starlings transported in darkened cages which were constantly rotating on a

\* *Journal für Ornithologie*, July 1935; April 1936; January 1937.

phonograph disc during the journey, and which rotation did *not* affect the ability to home, concludes that this ability cannot be said to depend wholly on visual orientation, that is, on the recalling from memory of visual impressions—landmarks seen. It is much more likely, he affirms, that the bird has a faculty which enables it when released away from home *to sense the home direction and to fly in this direction immediately upon liberation*. Perhaps we may assume that the racing pigeon has to some degree at least this identical sense despite the fact that it is descended from *Columba livia* which possessed little homing ability, and despite the even more important fact that it has been subjected to the more or less unfavorable influences attending domestication.

A more or less common incentive to home is hunger. It is in the strong expectation of getting food that the homer enters its loft immediately upon arrival. No sensible fancier would think of feeding his birds shortly before a race, though he might very conceivably give them water at that time. He will, however, make sure that the bird gets feed as well as water shortly after his return from a race. Even in training his birds, the fancier makes it a point always to feed them after, never before the flight. Other immediate causes why racing pigeons home are fear and loneliness. It must not be forgotten that after all, pigeons, though domesticated, are rather shy creatures. In strange surroundings they become especially nervous and very eager to fly off in order to get back to the familiar home loft, where they may be comfortable and at ease. Being accustomed to the society of their mates, pigeons are naturally lonely when cooped up with strange birds and released away from home. If they happen to have young in the nest, their anxiety to return to it is measurably increased. It is well known that usually female racers make the fastest time when they have offspring that is five or six days old, whereas male racers fly fastest when the squabs are approximately two weeks old or when they are "driving" their mates. Many fanciers fly only males because they consider them superior racers. Interesting in this connection is an experiment made to learn whether or not the action of the sex glands affects the ability to home. Since, apparently, there is a definite relation between the racing pigeon's urge to home and the wild bird's urge in the

springtime to return to its distant nesting site, two Dutch scientists, van Oordt and Bol,\* decided to determine if the sex-glands of racing pigeons act in any way as stimulators of the homing impulse. For this purpose they castrated a number of three to four-month old male homing pigeons of excellent stock and released them individually several months later for distances varying between six and sixty miles, flying at the same time normal pigeons of similar ages for purposes of control. Since castrated as well as normal birds returned from these flights—with the former proving somewhat faster flyers—the scientists concluded that the homing faculty was equally present in both kinds of pigeons and that it is *not* influenced by the sex-hormone.

Taken all in all, the combined lack of food and water, of companionship, of safety, of familiar surroundings, and of comfort in general furnishes the racing pigeon with a powerful motive to return to the place where it can satisfy these natural requirements and live contentedly. To which my friend and critic, Dr. Richardson, replies: "Motive does not explain ability, but only the functioning of ability. There has been but one Napoleon, though his motives have been shared by many. I offer this hypothesis: A pigeon's homing is the manifestation of a special sense—perhaps telepathy—by which, under favorable or normal conditions, the bird simply *knows* the direction in which home lies. Other animals manifest it, including man. I recall the account of a traveller in South America, in which it was related that the traveller was guided for many miles on a pitch-dark night across the flat, trackless pampas by a gaucho, to and from a little hut on that broad waste, and both times the objective was gained exactly. Asked how he did it, the gaucho said he simply *knew*."

\* *Biol. Zentralblatt*, 1929, Vol. 49, Heft. 3.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Fleet Wings*

#### ORIGIN, CARE AND HANDLING

**I**T IS NEITHER COLOR NOR SHAPE WHICH HAS MADE THE RACING Homer top favorite with thousands of fanciers in almost every part of the civilized world, but the bird's intelligence and resourcefulness. In all pigeondom the Racing Homer is the breed endowed with the sharpest eyesight, the keenest sense of homing, and the most extraordinary stamina for flying long distances, not infrequently under bad weather conditions. It is the only pigeon bred today for its homing instinct. As a carrier of important messages, the Racing Homer has been used in times of peace and in times of war by every civilized country on earth. Hundreds of these undaunted, swift fliers emerged as heroes from the first world war, their feats of daring and courage in the face of almost certain death no less glorious than those of men. Thousands of racing homers serve their country in the present conflict.

The modern Racing Homer is a hybrid. The various kinds of blood coursing in his veins were originally those of the Carrier, the Cumulet, the Owl, and the Tumbler. The early Racing Homer was known as the Antwerp Carrier or Homing Pigeon—*le pigeon voyageur*. Before the Belgians took it upon themselves, approximately 150 years ago, to breed by means of rigid selection a pigeon of more or less uniform size and shape, as well as powerful flying and intense homing ability, Dragoons, Carriers, Beards, and even Long-faced Owls had been used as messengers.

The early Belgian Racing Homer, the result of crossing half a dozen different varieties, in which crossing the Owl and the Cumulet played an important part, did not of course have the endurance possessed by today's racing homer. He was flown from fifteen to fifty miles at the most, whereas today's birds are trained to home for distances of from 500 to 2000 miles. Through painstaking selection of the speediest and longest

flyers, there has been developed a bird with a sound sense of homing and a powerful physique to withstand unusually hard physical strain.

Racing Homers today are named after the breeders whose patience and intelligence resulted in the production of superior strains. Most of the early strains bore Belgian names, such as Gigot, Gits, Delhougne, Nils, Wegemans, Spies, Deloez, Debaillie. Later strains frequently imported into America and England were Hansenne, Wegge, Putnam, Barker, Gurney, and others. One of the most successful of the old masters in the racing homer field was J. W. Logan, founder of the great Logan strain in England, which he developed from such strains as Barker, Gits, Goosens, Soffle, Hansenne, and Tofts.

At one time Logan was so eager to procure a famous pair of Belgian birds belonging to M. Gits that he offered him the best carriage horses in all England, but his offer was refused. In 1898 he founded the National Flying Club of England, gaining many outstanding successes in it. In 1924 he disposed of his loft of birds. It was one of the greatest sales held in either English or Belgian racing history. One hundred and four birds brought the astounding total of £3721 or approximately \$18,605. One of them alone, the famous racing winner "1826" realized £225, or about \$1125, which at that time was the largest amount ever paid for a pedigreed homing pigeon.

A good racing pigeon should have a broad skull, with a prominent frontal suggesting brain capacity; a bright, bold, and clear eye of almost any color except broken black or "bull," with a well-rounded, not too large cere which should cover the cornea completely; strong, muscular shoulders, and a well-set, fairly deep chest. The bird's wings should be proportionate to its size and well set, with strong, thick-set butts. When spread they should form a gradually tapering arch, with the ninth and tenth flights of equal length, or else the tenth slightly longer. The flights should be broad and springy. The tail should be strong, moderately long, and closely packed. A good tail enables a racer not only to make a quick get-away, but it is also more easily manipulated against the wind.

The weight of racing homers in first-class training condition is from fourteen to sixteen ounces for males, and from twelve to fourteen ounces for females. The male should measure approximately 10½" from tip of beak to tip of tail, and the female

9½". Very important for racing pigeons are measurements of wings and back. Old males, weighing sixteen ounces, should measure 13", and young males less than six months old, 12½" from the center of the back to the tip of the wing flight when the wing is spread normally. For old females, weighing fourteen or fifteen ounces, the length should be 12½", and for young ones, 12".

#### MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING OF RACERS

THE CONDITIONING and breeding of Racing Homers is a subject so broad and yet so specialized that it is impracticable to present here more than a few of the basic principles and practices. If you are interested in this very attractive phase of the pigeon hobby, then you should subscribe to a racing pigeon magazine.

Let it be said at the very beginning, there is no greater sportsman in pigeondom than the racing fancier. He is in the game solely for the love and glory of it. With every race in which he enters birds, he takes a chance of losing some of them, no matter how carefully they are trained and managed. Sometimes his most valuable birds fail to return. In other words, he must ever be prepared to sacrifice not only the birds themselves but the many, many hours of patient effort devoted to conditioning them for competition. If he is a true racing fancier, these and other disappointments will spur him on only to more determined and more thoughtful effort. For what greater joy can his heart know than the triumph of one of his swift feathered charges over fifty, a hundred, or even a thousand other fine birds?

Since a racing man breeds for the mental, the hidden, qualities more than he does for the physical, as do most other pigeon fanciers, and since these invisible qualities are seldom apparent to the inexperienced, the only safe and practical way for the beginner to make a good start with racing pigeons is to rely on their ancestry, as evidenced by their pedigrees. Blood will tell in racing pigeons more quickly and more surely than in any other breed, for the reason that they or their youngsters can be put to the acid test in a comparatively short time.

It is imperative that the novice in the racing fancy insure

early success by purchasing the very best homing pigeons he can afford. Under no conditions should he cross mediocre with quality birds, since it will require years of the most patient effort to breed out the mediocrity that is sure to crop out in the offspring again and again. Unless he knows quality in racing pigeons, he should let a reliable fancier with a well-established and successful strain select the foundation stock for him. In normal times he will usually be able to get a reasonably good pair of youngsters (month-old squeakers, which have never seen the outside of their loft) for \$10, a quality pair for \$25, and a pair of embryo champions anywhere from \$50 to \$100, and more. It costs no more to feed and keep high-class racers than scrubs, and it is infinitely more satisfactory and enjoyable. It is utter folly to expect to win a race of any importance at all with a scrub pigeon, a bird whose limited intelligence and endurance cannot possibly be a match for the initiative, homing ability, and stamina which for generations have been painstakingly bred into the racer of quality. For all these reasons the very best foundation stock is none too good for the beginner—though if his purse be lean, he may well content himself with quality old, “stock,” birds, used solely for breeding.

Since the housing, feeding, and breeding requirements for racing homers are in many respects different from those of fancy and utility pigeons, they must be carefully studied and met by the beginner before success is likely to attend his efforts. The most suitable location for a racing loft is one sufficiently elevated that the birds may view the surrounding country from their trap cage without obstruction from adjoining buildings, trees, and the like. This is the reason why many a racing man builds his loft on top of his garage or other convenient outhouse. Such a loft becomes a more or less distinctive landmark to the pigeons, enabling them to home more rapidly. Usually it is best to have the loft face south or east.

Overcrowding of the loft should be avoided by all means. To accommodate six pairs of pigeons, a loft six feet wide, eight feet long, and seven feet high is necessary. In other words, the minimum amount of air space for each bird is approximately twenty-eight cubic feet. Most racing pigeon lofts have three separate compartments: one for youngsters; one for stock birds; one for the racing pairs. In winter, three extra compart-

ments, made by dividing each of the original compartments into two by solid board partitions (not by laths or wire-netting) so that the birds cannot see one another, are used to keep the sexes apart.

The racing loft \* should be light, dry, and draft-free. A floor made of wood or cement is most suitable. The whole structure should be designed to keep mice, rats, and other vermin out. It should be an airy, roomy, bright, and clean home, in which the dwellers will thrive year after year. Two roomy, well-lighted nest-boxes should be provided for each breeding pair. These boxes are usually equipped with movable wire or lath fronts so that any one pair may be caged up for mating or other purposes.

Perhaps the most essential single piece of equipment in the racing loft is the "trap"—at the entrance and exit to the loft. It is a simple device which permits the birds to enter easily and quickly, but not to leave. Usually a number of straight pieces of wire or wire bars—"bob wires"—fastened to swing forward (*into* the loft when a pigeon about to enter the loft presses against them), but not backward, serve the purpose of efficient trapping. Of course, the birds must be trained to use such a trap. Quick trapping is absolutely essential to record the time of arrival of birds returning from races and from training flights. There is hardly anything more disconcerting to a racing fancier than to have a bird fly a good race only to fail to place as a winner because of slow trapping.

Since the efficiency of every racing pigeon depends largely on its physical condition, everything possible should be done to put and to keep the bird in top-notch condition. Hence a racing loft should be kept so scrupulously clean that lice, mites, and flies will have no opportunity to breed in it and to lower the birds' physical resistance. Moreover, racing homers should be given frequent opportunity to bathe, especially when the weather is warm.

The proper feeding of racing homers is a task requiring careful study, since overfeeding is as bad as underfeeding. A fat pigeon is exhausted after a short flight, standing about with mouth open not unlike a panting dog. An undernourished pigeon frequently fails to return from a race. Certain grains, such as corn, rice, and hemp are fattening, especially when

\* See also Chapter 5 on *Lofts* — EQUIPMENT AND MANAGEMENT, p. 40.



fed in quantities to birds getting but little exercise. Peas, wheat, and vetches or tares are other components of the racing pigeon's food mixture. It is said that many fanciers in Belgium feed their pigeons entirely on vetches or tares. Needless to say, the grains should be clean, hard, and dry. The proof of their quality is the effect they produce on the birds' condition. Since the proportion of the various grains in the mixture depends on many factors, such as the season of the year, the climate, the physical condition of the birds, the amount of their daily exercise, the novice will do well to use the feed mixture recommended by a reliable fancier until such time as he himself has discovered the particular food requirements of his own flock. Of course, the birds should always have access to plenty of "health" grit and fresh, clean water.

With reference to the mating of Racing Pigeons, Mr. Edwin Lang Miller, famous New York fancier, gives the following advice: "Personally I am partial to the mating of half-brother and half-sister, as I believe that line-breeding is the surest way to perpetuate and accentuate the good qualities of our champion pigeons. In line-breeding one breeds for quality, stamina, and other outstanding characteristics of a winner.

"There is an old saying among animal breeders—'strength from the female, color from the male,' which certainly applies to pigeons. For stock purposes I especially like a rather good-sized hen with broad shoulders and back, tapering toward the tail; not too high on the legs, and of even temperament. I have found that invariably a tightly drawn hen of nervous temperament and poor proportions seldom produces quality youngsters, no matter how good a racer she may be. On the other hand, almost any cock of average quality, good blood, and normal proportions is a capable reproducer. I am decidedly more interested in the type of hen to be used for breeding than in the cock. However, the best of stock hens cannot overcome the deficiencies of a poor-quality male.

"I do not like the crossing of opposites, such as a large hen with a small cock, or of a long bird with a short one. I favor the blending of birds which are near the average in type and carriage. Again, it is not advisable to couple too old with too young a bird. The real breeding period of a pigeon consists of the first six years of its life. However, there are notable exceptions. My champion 700-miler 'Quicksilver,' which made an

average speed of 800 yards per minute and beat the next best loft by four days, was bred from an eleven-year old male."

In general, it is advisable to mate a male with a female only if both possess in large measure those qualities which the breeder values highly. By so doing he can mate up at least a few pairs of true excellence. If his objective is to produce long-distance fliers, he must mate together long-distance racers—not a long-distance bird with a short-distance bird. Many fanciers favor the mating of well-developed yearlings of proven ancestry as producers of quality offspring. It is hardly ever good practice to mate together two very old birds.

In all your breeding activities, keep in mind the fact that if you wish to retain or develop some special characteristic, either mental or physical, you can attain your end easily and surely by mating those birds which possess that characteristic. However, such inbreeding, if long continued, is likely to produce pigeons of greatly diminished size, vigor, and fertility.

Most fanciers separate the sexes in the fall and remate them in the early spring, usually in February and March. Breeding pairs intended for racing are allowed to raise but very few youngsters; otherwise they would not stand the strain of the race course. The breeding activities must be so planned that the birds will be in the best possible physical condition at the time of the race. Ordinarily the most promising youngsters are raised during the months of April and May.

It is imperative that your homing pigeons be so tame that you may easily catch and handle them. I have known so-called fanciers to enter their lofts only to see their birds fly madly round and round, some dashing violently against the wire-netting, some rushing into strange nestboxes, all of them keeping as far away from their owner as was physically possible. Fear ruled these flocks and fear made it difficult to work with them. Instead of trying to understand their birds and to treat them with intelligence and kindness, these men regarded them as so much live property, selfishly to be exploited, but never to be tamed into feathered friends.

I read with much delight and satisfaction the answer which Mr. M. H. Paget, of national racing fancier fame, gave some time ago to an inquirer on this score in the "American Pigeon Journal." Among other things, he said, "I can and do pick up my birds anywhere in the loft. They *like* to be picked up. I

talk to them just as I would to a child. When I call certain pigeons by name, they will come to me. When I send them out to fly for the amusement of friends, my birds fly until I call them back. That is what I call control. Treat your birds with kindness and consideration and they will tame themselves. When I feed my birds, I give them a little feed at a time; then I stop and let them look for the next grain. Soon they will come to me for some more food. That is the time when I reach down to pick one up, to fondle it for a minute or two, the while keeping the others waiting for more grain. I handle all my youngsters as early as possible before they start to moult, so that they are tame within a few weeks. Keep your birds slightly hungry, feed a little at a time, and soon they will learn to meet you when you enter the loft. Treat your pigeons in the way in which you wish them to go and they will go that way; abuse them intentionally or unintentionally, and they will pay you back in similar coin."

Opinions differ regarding the proper training of racing pigeons. Furthermore, the subject is so broad and intricate that to treat it at all thoroughly would require far more space than is available here. Since no two racing pigeons, even of the same strain, react in the same manner to training and since there are literally innumerable factors entering into this whole complicated matter, I shall content myself with presenting practicable training rules on which most racing fanciers are agreed.

The principal aims in training pigeons for racing are, first, to develop their physical stamina to a degree at which they can endure long and continuous flights; secondly, to keep afresh their memory of the route or routes over which they were flown. Two methods are applied: that of straight direction and that of increasing distance. The birds are released at a point, one, three, five, ten, twenty-five, fifty, one hundred, and more miles' distance from home, and always from the same direction. Later on, when they show more and more speed and acumen in reaching the home loft, the direction may be changed so as to teach them to approach from any point of the compass. To gain the best results, training flights should take place only when the skies are clear. If owing to bad weather a good bird should meet disaster during the training period, it is best to let him fully recuperate from the shock before tossing him again. Needless to say, no pigeon not in

prime physical condition should be sent on a training flight. Birds in bad feather or suffering from colds and other ailments, or about to lay, should be kept at home. Those pigeons which improve with each successive week of training are the ones to be used for subsequent contests.

In tossing youngsters, some fanciers favor liberating them all together the first few times up to five miles' distance, and then single-tossing them over the same distance. One prominent fancier favors double-tossing, that is letting birds fly in pairs. He maintains that if two are tossed together, they immediately strike for home without circling for a considerable time, as a single bird is wont to do. This fancier also changes the direction of the route, tossing some birds north and some south of the direct course on which they are to be flown in subsequent races. He avers that they will have to learn to find their way home from any direction, since cross-winds frequently blow them off the race course. He follows this zig-zag method of training for thirty-five miles in order to familiarize his birds with as much as possible of the territory surrounding their home loft.

Early morning is the best training time. In hilly or mountainous country more and shorter tosses are the rule for the first twenty or thirty miles than in flat country, where a five-mile jump means little to the racers. The primary tosses and the first few weeks of training are the most important. If you give a pigeon the right training during that time, it is likely to reward you for your trouble. Do not train youngsters under twelve weeks of age. There is a "glorious uncertainty" about racing youngsters the first few times. If you want to know what great number and queer manner of tricks Dame Fortune is capable of playing on you with your "sure-fire" winners, just try this fascinating phase of the sport.

Short rather than long intervals should characterize the training tosses. Up to forty or fifty-mile flights, birds may be sent day after day, then with two or three days intervening, always provided, of course, that the weather is favorable. The more single tosses the birds have had, the more familiar will they be with the course.

Young males race best when they are mating, not driving, or when they have five to eight-day old youngsters in the nest. There are many exceptions to this rule, however, and many

fanciers have sent young males to the race when they were on eggs. Young females are usually not allowed to lay, but are given pot (dummy) eggs. If, however, they are about to lay or have just laid, or are feeding young with pigeon milk, they should not be flown.

It should not be concluded from the foregoing that unmated youngsters do not race well. By mating them, you merely provide an additional incentive to hasten home. Ordinarily, a mated pair of birds should not be sent to the same race. It is better to send the male to one, and the female to another race.

Old males fly well when their mates have laid the first egg or when there is a ten-day old youngster in the nest. Usually an old female will race fast to eggs which she has incubated from ten to fourteen days. All these matters pertain to individual traits.

Only to the extent to which the fancier studies each bird carefully to determine the particular conditions under which he will fly his best, can he hope for some measure of success. Some birds invariably excel at one hundred miles, others at three hundred, and still others at five hundred.

Many racing men feed special mixtures, containing peas, vetches, lentils, rice, canary seed, and millet. Some will add a little codliver oil to condition their birds. Fat and sluggish birds make poor flyers. Like race horses, racing pigeons give their best when their bodies are lean and hard. Birds should not be allowed to feed to repletion. On the other hand, it is dangerous to send birds to a race on empty stomachs. On their return from a race, the birds should have only a light feeding, since their digestive systems are somewhat upset by the great exertion. The day following their return, they may be placed on their usual rations and given an opportunity to bathe. With such treatment they will soon return to normal condition and mode of living.

The conditioning of old pigeons for five-hundred or thousand-mile races is an expert's task. Such birds are usually mated late in the season and allowed to breed but very little. Their preparation for racing includes very careful feeding and consistent training so that they will be in the best possible physical condition at racing time. Moreover, it includes managing and retarding the birds' moult of the large flight feathers

sufficiently so that they will have good wings, from which no feathers, or even portions of feathers, are missing.

If you breed racing homers, it will most assuredly pay you to join your local racing club, which in turn will afford you ample opportunity each season to race young as well as old birds against many others for distances of from fifty to five hundred miles, and more. Owners of winning birds are usually given diplomas, certificates, or cash prizes, depending on the distances flown, the total number of birds entered, and the general importance of the race. Many times club members place "side-bets" on their birds, thus heightening the interest in the race appreciably. Both, the International Federation of American Homing Pigeon Fanciers and the American Racing Union exert untiring efforts year after year to promote the most sportsmanlike interests of the racing fanciers in their respective districts throughout the nation. Among other activities they appoint official district surveyors who measure and compute (in yards) the exact distances from the various points of liberation to the individual fanciers' lofts.

Birds entered in a race are provided with special, numbered legbands, which by means of electric timing clocks and other aids are registered when the pigeon is entered and carefully checked when it has returned, thus insuring fair treatment to all club members. The contesting birds are usually shipped by express to the point of liberation, where the express or railway agent releases them at the specified time. Immediately upon liberation he wires the exact moment of release and other pertinent information, such as the condition of the weather, to the race officials.

Since frequently several hundred pigeons are flown in a given race, you can readily imagine the eager anticipation with which each club member scans the heavens for the return of his winged charges, for he is very anxious that they trap immediately upon arrival so that he may clock and officially report the exact time of their homecoming. It is little wonder that men of almost all ages and walks of life are passionately devoted to this sport, in which patience, intelligence, and perseverance are prime requisites for success. If once you enter this sport and devote yourself to it wholeheartedly, you will find it exceedingly difficult to abandon it for any great length of time.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Fleet Wings*

#### MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING

THE SELECTION OF BIRDS WHICH ARE TO SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION stock of an efficient racing loft is by no means an easy one since many important factors must be carefully weighed. Probably the most important are how much to pay for the birds; what strain to get—short or long-distance flyers, or both; whether to start with squeakers or with old birds; and, finally, whether to buy stock from a local or a distant loft. The more thoughtful consideration the beginner gives to each one of these matters, the more likely will he make satisfying decisions. To insure the success of the fascinating hobby of racing pigeons painstaking planning is absolutely essential. Know exactly what ends you wish to reach with your hobby; then take plenty of time and thought to accomplish these ends. It is an easy matter to buy a lot of so-called racing homers here and there in a hurry at low prices with no guarantee of satisfaction, and to feed and house them. Before long such a hit-and-miss venture would result in keen disappointment for the simple reason that carelessly bought foundation stock is likely to consist of old, worn-out birds—culls, which have failed to meet the seller's own needs—a lot of miscellaneous birds of unknown and probably unrecognizable bloodlines on which good feed and intelligent training would be largely wasted.

It is not the number of birds with which the beginner starts his hobby, but their quality that counts. And since high quality commands a correspondingly high price, it is far wiser to invest fifty dollars in, shall we say, two pairs of squeakers whose parents or grandparents were competent racers of record than practically to throw fifty dollars away on a dozen or more squeakers whose ancestors may or may not have won races for many years past. It costs no more to feed, house, and train quality pigeons than duds; and it is likely to bring much more joy and satisfaction in the end. On rare occasions there are

real bargains in fine stock, but unless you know racing homers very well, do not let such offers tempt you. It takes years of competent study and intelligent experience to know truly whether there is good stuff in a certain bird or not. Remember, this hobby of racing pigeons is rather serious business, affording pleasure and satisfaction only to the man with sufficient intelligence to plan years ahead, with sufficient honesty and courage to admit and to correct his mistakes, and with the necessary patience and perseverance to work for the ultimate realization of his plans. Assuredly, keeping racing pigeons is not to be recommended as a hobby to the man who wants to win in a hurry—he belongs at the race-track where he can see his wagers turn into wins or losses almost in a jiffy.

Assuming, then, that you have the qualifications of a true fancier, the question arises as to whether you should buy your foundation stock locally or not. That depends on whether or not reliable fanciers live in your neighborhood who have birds in their lofts that have actually won in fairly recent and important contests. Even in the most successful loft there are very few champions, the rest of the flock being more or less mediocre—so that it would hardly pay you to patronize the owner of such a loft unless he would sell you the offspring of some of his winners. Ask to see the pedigree of any bird you consider purchasing, for that is practically the only positive written assurance you will have of getting pigeons whose ancestors have been consistent winners. Beware of the fancier who does not keep careful written record of his flock, for he rarely breeds methodically or scientifically. The more you study the pedigree and race-record of a bird, the surer you make of getting a pigeon which is the result of generations of breeding for certain highly essential qualities, such as physical vigor, alertness, and intelligence. Some pigeon-men maintain that by obtaining foundation stock locally, you will get birds especially bred for weather and other conditions peculiar to your race-course, which may prove to be a distinct advantage. However, characteristics acquired through training in a particular environment are generally not inherited. If the climatic and other racing hazards in the seller's territory are similar to those in your own, and if the general breeding aims—to produce short or long-distance performers, or both—are also similar, it would not matter much how far distant the seller lived.



Naturally, pigeons bred for generations in a mild climate, which affects bodily vigor, feather development, and time of moulting, would if they were to be established in a cold climate have to be given time to adjust themselves physically and mentally to the greatly changed seasonal temperatures. Thus, the first generation of birds imported from distant states or countries rarely does well in given localities.

Furthermore, in buying foundation stock you should not expect to get birds suitable for the long-distance events from a breeder whose winnings have mostly been in the short distances and who makes little attempt to breed and train long-distance flyers. Frequently, short-distance strains are rather small, but very alert, birds, often lacking the size and vitality to fly five hundred or more miles. Remember Hansenne, the great Belgian fancier, who specialized in training his birds only for the long-distance events and who produced a strain with short (bull) necks, short legs, and strong backs and shoulders. It won him lasting fame. Wegge, another famous Belgian fancier, maintained that his birds, which were larger than most other Belgian strains and very closely bred, raced especially well over distances from two hundred and fifty miles upward.

Most beginners will find it expedient to start with several pairs of squeakers, purchasing them from a thoroughly reliable fancier who over a considerable number of years has developed a distinct strain, and whose race-record may readily be established by reference to the pigeon press. Since strains differ in physique, disposition, general behavior, and intelligence, it is best to procure foundation stock representing one or two proven families and not to mix up half a dozen unrelated blood-lines. Because different strains often vary in behavior, they may require not one but several training methods, which the average fancier has neither the time nor the inclination to employ. If the purchaser intends to race the youngsters, then he should make reasonably sure that their parents were successful in turning out winners. If, on the other hand, he intends to use the youngsters for stock purposes, he should select birds actually bred from top-notch performers. It has often been found that a veteran long-distance winner, owing to the drain of strenuous training and racing, may not be able to transmit physical stamina (in addition to intelli-

gence) to his immediate offspring, but that his sons and daughters, if handled properly, will be able to transmit these desirable traits to future generations. In other words, even the fastest racers do not always produce outstanding performers in the first generation.

Usually squeakers are readily settled to a new loft. They should be afforded an early opportunity to view the surroundings of their new loft—before they have learned the full use of their wings. For this purpose, they may be placed in the trap, or, still better, in a small cage on the roof of the loft, where they can view their new environment to advantage. After a few days the trap may be left open. Should the youngsters not choose to go out, they may be placed gently on the landing-board or on the roof of the loft. Under no condition should they be chased out of the loft or be suddenly frightened because, being in strange surroundings, they become easily confused and lost. Moreover, it is bad practice to treat squeakers (or any other pigeon for that matter) harshly, for then they will tend to look on their keeper as their enemy, not as their friend, and become afraid the moment he approaches.

After the squeakers have been in your loft for two or three weeks and you have trained them to your whistle or other mode of call, begin to starve them a little so that they will go through the trap on command. Soon they will associate your call with feeding time. If you maintain this practice through the youngsters' training period, they should at race-time make quickly for the landing-board and trap in a few seconds. For fast trapping at race-time, some fanciers in metropolitan areas rely on the so-called dropper or poker pigeon, which they throw into the air the moment they sight the approach of a race-bird. The poker attracts the latter's attention; then both drop to the loft-platform together. The birds are guided to the trap with eight-foot bamboo poles, the meaning of which they were taught as youngsters. The Belgian type of trap, equipped with from four to eight stalls, through one of which the incoming racer must pass before he can push the bobs aside and enter the loft proper, is widely used.

But to get back to the treatment of squeakers. Make sure that the drinking fountain is in plain sight and within easy reach of the young birds. If they do not drink, dip their beaks gently into the water, and they will soon learn to drink by themselves.

Most young homers are quite intelligent creatures which mature early. When first received, squeakers sometimes eat very little and lose weight for a few days. However, once real hunger sets in, they begin to eat heartily and soon regain the lost weight.

If a new loft is to be stocked with old birds, they are usually kept prisoner until such time as the fancier feels he has raised sufficient offspring from them to reimburse him for the probable loss of the old birds when they are released. Some pigeons are so loyal to their old loft that it is practically impossible to settle them at a new one. Others, more adaptable and perhaps more intelligent, accustom themselves quickly to their new home. In settling old birds it is very needful to make them as happy and comfortable in the new loft as possible, and to do just the opposite at the old loft, should they return to it; that is, they should be refused admittance as well as food and water.

Early spring is considered a good time at which to settle birds to a new loft. For several hours each day they are put in a wire-cage on the roof of the loft in order to get them used to their new environment. To increase their attachment for the new loft, the trap is not opened until they have hatched their first youngsters. It should be added here that as a rule old birds do not race well to a new loft, for which they rarely manifest the same devotion as for their old loft. This is one reason why most fanciers purchasing old birds will use them only as stock-birds, that is only for breeding purposes. But stock-birds which have opportunity to fly in the open usually raise healthier youngsters than so-called prisoners. Dr. Conway writing in an *A.R.P. News Year Book*, suggests that "a pigeon to be settled should be mated to a bird that has been flying at the loft, raise some youngsters, and have an aviary to see the outside surroundings of the loft. About the latter part of June or the beginning of July is a good time for settlement, as the pigeons are then farther along in their moult. Moreover, they are in a quiescent state at that time, as they should be sitting on eggs. If it is a hen that is to be settled, she should lay one egg, and be let out the day on which she is to lay her second egg. A cock should be let out when he is driving the hen to nest. A method sometimes used for a few days or a week before the release is to soak one wing of the

bird in water and to rub some good toilet-soap on about four feathers so that the bird cannot fly well in the loft. On the following day two more feathers in the same wing, and on the third day all the primaries and several secondaries are treated similarly. Just soap one wing to throw the bird off balance. The Belgians use a wing-lock, which is also effective but rarely procurable in this country. Now let the pigeon out on the landing-board hungry and feed it there several times, the while whistling so that it may learn to know where to get its feed. The next time place your bird on the roof of your loft that it may see the surroundings. Do this several times, always keeping your eye on the bird so you may catch it, should it try to fly off and drop to the ground. After the pigeon has been on the roof several times and has found the landing-board and entered the loft by itself, begin to wash off the soap gradually. Soon your bird will fly better and better. So let it exercise with the other birds, including its mate. Thereafter you can put the bathtub out and let the bird get rid of the rest of the soap in its feathers, for it should now be settled to your loft."

It is not always easy to determine the exact day on which to give old birds to be settled at new loft their liberty for the first time. Some authorities affirm that for cocks the right time is when they start to drive hens to the nest, and for hens it is between the laying of the first and second eggs. However, at these times both cocks and hens are nervous and therefore easily confused. A driving cock who has lost sight of his mate may in the confusion follow a strange hen into some other loft, while a hen released for the first time may, if confused, enter a strange loft to lay her second egg. Old-country fanciers let the newly bought birds lay the first time and then open the trap, usually in the afternoon, claiming that during incubation the birds are calm and undisturbed and will, if treated gently and looked after properly, be as likely to remain at the new loft then as not. But if the birds have young squabs in the nest, they will usually make for the old loft the first chance they get. Rather interesting in connection with the topic of settling old birds is the practice of Belgian fanciers not to keep prisoners at all. The birds are usually bought and sold during the fall and winter. All sales are subject to "adduction." This means that the seller's loft is to remain open up to a certain

date so that the buyer may get his birds up to that time. Old cocks are settled by mating them to hens colored more or less like their former mates.

While it is often difficult, and in some instances impossible, to settle old birds at a new loft, much depends on their disposition and also on the treatment accorded them at the new home. So many small, but yet vital, factors over which the fancier has practically no control enter into this matter of accustoming old birds to new surroundings that no hard and fast rules can be laid down. I have seen old birds made to feel and to stay at their new loft in less than a few months' time, whereas others would return to the old loft time after time and rather starve to death outside of it (the old loft was closed) than to go back to the new loft, where food and drink awaited them.

*"Il n'y a qu'un bon dans chaque nid."* (There is only one good one in each nest!) was the pronouncement of the Belgian fancier Jurion, who was an efficient inbreeder. And on the basis of elaborate records kept for years, M. Duchateau confirmed this statement, maintaining that while a pair of pigeons may produce numerous offspring of quality, it rarely produces more than one bird of championship calibre. In other words, Mother Nature is niggardly in the bestowal of certain qualities desired by pigeon breeders—or is it merely that a champion pigeon represents a lucky combination of numerous hereditary factors which the fancier has not as yet learned to control? I wonder.

At any rate, your future racers should be selected only from the offspring of very vigorous and intelligent parents. The health of the parent birds is of prime importance. Like begets like—you must not expect a weak pigeon to produce a strong youngster. So take a good look at the old birds. What about their eggs? If they are oddly shaped, small, or not normal in other respects, they are unlikely to hatch normal young. Such eggs are laid by hens which may be too young, too old, or too fat—they are not in fit physical condition. Prisoners more or less overfed, lacking regular exercise and laying queerly shaped eggs, have been known to lay normally shaped and fertile ones after they were given regular flying exercise and thus got rid of the excess flesh.

If an egg is normal in shape but infertile, the fault is usually

that of the cock. Sometimes fertile eggs fail to hatch because their shells are too thick or too thin, which may be the fault of the hen. Eggs with rough or very dirty shells often will not hatch because the air cannot penetrate the shell during incubation, or else the emerging youngsters will be weaklings.

When the young are between three and four weeks old, find out how solid and firm their little bodies are by grasping them gently over and across the shoulders. Solidity, as against flabbiness, is a most desirable quality in most young birds, but particularly in a young pigeon destined for strenuous flying and racing. With some practice you will soon be able to detect and to eliminate all loosely bodied youngsters. In your examination of squeakers you will find some with crooked keels, caused by birds sitting on the edge of nestbowls, by rickets (pointing to lack of certain vitamins in their food), or simply by inheritance since most homers are rather deep in keel. Ordinarily, a crooked keel is not evidence of low quality, there being many a good racer and breeder so deformed. If the cause is lack of vitamins, then the bird's physical constitution is likely to be below par.

At about four weeks of age, a husky youngster of thoroughbred strain should have good, strong secondaries, which point to sound health. Youngsters at all backward in physical development for their age should be discarded. Only birds with clean, bright, smooth, and tight-fitting feathers, well-developed flights and tail feathers, and with solid, lean, and strong bodies should be kept. Flabby, fat young, with baggy vents, very crooked keels, dirty plumage, and pale flight-tips should usually be eliminated, as should also those either too small or too large in size. If a youngster four weeks old can fly off your hand to the floor of the loft lightly, it is likely to make a satisfactory flyer; but if when alighting, the pigeon drops clumsily with a heavy thud, not mustering sufficient wing-strength to save its body, it will, according to a noted fancier, never make a champion.

When buying old birds for stock or other purposes, certain fundamental considerations should be kept clearly in mind. First of all, consider the seller. Is he a well-known, dependable fancier who has been a breeder for at least ten years and whose birds have actually won high places in severe contests? If so, does he keep accurate record of his stud so that in buying

birds from him you know exactly what, if anything, their ancestors have accomplished? Do not be satisfied with mere verbal recommendations of the birds you are about to purchase, but demand definite written or printed evidence of their performances as given in official race results—that is, of course, if you are seriously interested in obtaining quality stock. Naturally, most fanciers will not sell their champions, of which they may have but very few, but will offer you something below championship quality. It is for you to decide how far below this standard you can afford to go and still develop a winning strain of birds. Moreover, for high-quality stock-birds which are in good, all-round breeding form, you will have to pay top prices. Occasionally when an old-time fancier finds it necessary to disband his stud, you can buy old birds of quality at reasonable prices; however, if this fancier's strain has won often, his birds will be snapped up by friends long before they are offered to the general fancy.

Unless you know exactly what to look for in racing pigeons, you can do no better than to visit a number of prominent lofts in your neighborhood and thus get acquainted with the various strains kept and with their peculiarities. If you go to a horse-race, you will see many different sizes, shapes, and types of horses on the track. Well, the same is true of racing pigeons. Experienced fanciers usually have made up their minds definitely as to what their particular ideal racing homer should be in size, shape, color, and other essentials. They will not hesitate to cull mercilessly season after season in order to maintain and to improve the particular type of birds which approach their ideal. Furthermore, they will be very cautious about introducing foreign blood into their flock, because they realize that many strains do not interbreed at all well and that very careful and long experimentation is necessary to produce a truly smooth blending of two different blood-lines. Take, for example, E. Lang Miller's well-known strain of birds, founded on four Wegges purchased in Belgium in 1910. After introducing a few Osmans and other birds, this fancier devoted eight years to testing his stock very thoroughly so as to learn which birds to use in the formation of his strain. After exhaustive examination of the valuable material, he selected five birds with which to found his internationally famous strain, in which there has been *no outcross for twenty-five years*—surely note-

worthy testimony to the expertness with which the five birds were selected and bred.

But, you ask, what exactly are some of the more essential requirements which a mature homing pigeon which I am about to buy for a stock-bird should have? In other words, how can I tell a good racing pigeon when I see one? First of all, avoid very small or very large birds; the former usually lack the staying power and reserve energy so necessary in long races, while the latter are often so slow and clumsy that they require special training. Medium-sized, well-balanced birds make good racers. The advice of the successful European fancier W. E. Barker is by all means to avoid birds possessed of long, rounded skulls, very fine dark eye-ceres, and pale, small, deep-set eyes. Preference should be given to birds with rather short and angular skulls, reasonably well-developed ceres, and bright and full eyes. Furthermore, good racing pigeons have tight-fitting body feathers, with the primary flights of good average width and the secondaries fairly long. Loose wings, with intermittent open spaces, are to be avoided. The chest should be fairly broad, the back strong, the keel straight and not too deep, and the stern not too bulky. Short, cobby birds of the Modena or King type, as well as long, slender ones make poor racers. "A young racer is in good condition," states Oscar W. Opsann, noted New York fancier, "when he is very active about his coop, has bright eyes, and when his windpipe is closed completely; his breast-meat should be as dark-blue as a plum, but the breastbone milk-white." While color of plumage in itself is not a determining factor so far as quality is concerned, it should be rich and full, not weak and sickly. Whenever you see racing homers that have won races, make it a point to study the shape of their heads, the conformation of their bodies, and other essential points. To fly fast and long, a pigeon must have certain physical (as well as mental) characteristics which can be discerned by the experienced eye in the same manner in which a successful trackcoach can tell whether a given athlete has the right physique to carry him to success on the cinder-path.

While all blooded racing homers have certain desirable traits in common, they do not all look alike. In developing the racing homer, such noted Belgian fanciers as Hansenne, Gits, Wegge, Barker, and others had their own ideas as to just how



to go about producing birds of quality. They devoted the better part of their lives to the arduous, though enjoyable, task. The Hansenne was a long-distance strain, with short neck, short legs, fairly broad breast, and strong back and shoulders. Gits and Wegge led in the establishment of the modern Antwerp strain, the result of judicious crossing of the early "Antwerp" with English Flying Carriers and also with Dragoons. Even in recent times the best lofts in Antwerp house pigeons still whose general type strongly suggests the old English Dragoon and whose wing and shoulder conformations suggest the old English Carrier. Birds of the famous Barker, so-called Brussels, strain, were medium-sized, had sound feathering, medium-long flights, and were very eager to be aloft and flying. And while the modern American racing homer is the result of continual blending of the most promising Belgian, English, and American pigeon families, new strains are being established by thoroughgoing breeders, who in addition to possessing suitable foundation stock of superior quality, have also the necessary patience for such difficult achievement.

Since it is invisible qualities, as manifested in ability to home over long distances, speed of trapping, and ability to fly fast and continuously for hours, which the homer fancier wishes his birds' youngsters to have in as large measure as possible, he must perforce mate those cocks and hens which in themselves or in their parents or grandparents have actually shown these qualities in racing. Hit-and-miss matings based on anything but efficient racing of the birds or their ancestors, or on reliable pedigrees and other authentic written information obtained from a trustworthy fancier, seldom produce satisfactory offspring. That the successful mating of racing pigeons is a difficult art is amply proved by the few champions which are produced each year by hundreds of fanciers flying thousands of birds in every part of the country.

In breeding racing homers, the aim is usually to mate together birds of the highest possible homing ability in order to obtain youngsters even more highly endowed with this much-wanted quality than their parents. Year after year the fancier very carefully and patiently breeds one top-notch racer to another top-notch racer, making as sure as he can that each generation is more richly endowed with the desired qualities than the preceding—constantly adding stamina to stamina,

homing ability to homing ability, and endurance to endurance. So he selects the champion cock in his loft and mates him to the best and most suitable hen for his Number One pair. Then come the next best male and female, and so on until he has mated up all his birds. In other words, so far as breeding for the unseen qualities is concerned, he uses certainly not the average bird, but the specimen possessing them in an unusually large degree.

When, however, it comes to mating birds according to their physical qualifications, extremes must be shunned; otherwise they may be accentuated in the offspring and freaks result. Here a happy medium, a well-proportioned pigeon is wanted. It would be unwise, then, to select for an exceptionally large or small cock an equally large or small hen since the youngsters of such a union would quite probably be also odd-sized and therefore unfit for racing. For similar reasons, pigeons poor in feather, lacking sturdy flights, strong bodies, or other necessary qualities should not be mated. The fancier must be especially on guard against the slightest indication of physical weakness in his birds as shown in smaller-sized youngsters, lustreless plumage, ready susceptibility to various diseases, and other concrete evidence of physical decline.

Under no condition should he breed from birds having more or less serious defects, since many of these are hereditary. Take such a simple matter as temperament, for instance. A pigeon which is tame and even-tempered, which does not lose its head, so to speak, in strange surroundings at race-time but makes the best of trying conditions, is usually more easily trained and raced than one of high-strung and unstable disposition. The even-tempered bird is more apt to meet successfully race obstacles such as inclement weather, birds of prey, etc., which often appear suddenly, than the nervous, and often less intelligent, bird that is completely upset by any strange happening, particularly if it occurs with great suddenness. To breed from nervous pigeons is to perpetuate this undesirable trait, the manifestation of which has cost many a fancier an otherwise well-flown race. A highly successful breeder told me not long ago that his tamest birds were also his best racers. Sometimes nervousness is due to lack of certain vitamins in the food and can be eliminated by suitable diet regulation.

So far as the age of the birds to be paired is concerned, ex-

tremes should also be avoided. Only really mature birds in full vigor should be used for breeding. Well developed yearlings often produce good matings. Two very old birds, either or both of which are not very strong, should not be paired up. An old cock may be mated to a two or three-year old hen, and vice versa. On my last visit to Europe, a prominent fancier showed me with much pride a thirteen-year old cock which had won many a thrilling race and which was mated to a year-old hen. Well fed and given ample room in which to exercise, this old stock-bird was filling every egg, his owner breeding four youngsters from him every year—certainly this was a successful mating of old age and youth.

Some well-known fanciers favor the practice of mating yearlings together, judging the birds' value (before they have flown any long race) by the quality of their youngsters. If this is unsatisfactory for any reason, the old pair is broken up and remated. Close observation of both cock and hen over a period of time will usually reveal desirable and undesirable characteristics. If the cock is always on the alert, if he is eager to mate, promptly takes his turn at incubating, and defends his nest vigorously against all intruders, he is likely to make a satisfactory parent. If, on the other hand, the male is clumsy and stupid in his actions, slow to learn the nest-box assigned him, indifferent in his nesting and feeding duties, inactive and dull, then his breeding value may be seriously questioned. Some pigeon-men are strongly prejudiced against cocks that drive madly and nervously, because they are difficult to manage at racing time. Incidentally such jittery cocks should as a rule not be paired up with young or old hens afflicted with nervousness in order to avoid producing young of unstable disposition. Yearling cocks that fail to fertilize their eggs rarely race well; and delayed laying is hardly a good omen. A sound yearling hen should usually lay within ten days after she has been properly mated. If her eggs are not normal in shell, shape, or size, or if she becomes mopy and sickly at laying time, she either has some constitutional defect or lacks the right care. Hens which rather than feed their young regularly and well are anxious to nest again, should be discarded as they often produce weaklings. Barren hens, in the experience of many fanciers, often turn out to be capable racers. A good hen will lay easily and promptly. In fact, she may show so little sign

of laying as inadvertently to be sent on a race in egg. Her behavior in and about the nest is especially significant. If she sits tight and motionless when you examine her nest, if she covers and otherwise cares for her young properly, defending them if need be with her very life, she is a good breeder. In this connection I recall the case of a very brave hen with young being viciously attacked by an opossum which had forced his way at night into one of my lofts. Though badly wounded by the marauder, the bird stuck to her nest, saving the lives of her squabs at the price of her own.

While age is important, it is after all but one of numerous breeding qualifications, and no iron-clad rule can be laid down with respect to it. Careful and continual study by the fancier of the effect of different ages on the various matings in his loft will soon reveal physical and mental characteristics in the offspring pointing to wise or unwise selection of mates. Likewise, the effect of color-soundness of plumage should be noted in breeding—a healthy and rich, rather than a weak and washed-out, color is the aim. Kind of color is of comparatively little importance to most racing fanciers except in so far as a particular one is identified with a winning, very sturdy, or otherwise highly desirable strain of birds, it being thus easily recognized. During the present war, pigeons with so-called camouflaged colors (no one color dominant) have been bred, but such birds are of limited value since the breeder neither knows exactly nor controls the often rapidly changing color schemes of the landscape over which the bird has to fly, and once a bird of a certain color has been produced, it cannot, of course, be changed to suit changing conditions of terrain. To learn whether or not racing pigeons with “camouflaged” plumage are successful in evading detection by human and other enemies, we shall have to await the release of pertinent military information by the various signal pigeon corps at the termination of the war.

Racing homers are seldom bred for color, unless a given color is to be made lighter or darker for exhibition purposes or unless the fancier prefers a certain one. Some breeders do not like to pair up birds of the same color, but I do not think that this matters much so long as the coloring of the plumage shows lustre, thus pointing to physical fitness.

When it comes to methods of breeding, there is no agree-

ment among racing fanciers that any particular one is the best in that it will bring into being birds which almost invariably win races. Some young fanciers, impatient to achieve success quickly and regardless of cost, resort to indiscriminate crossing of strains—of mating wholly unrelated birds, fervently trusting to hit-and-miss schemes to produce a champion or near-champion. About the only requirement which their birds must meet to justify being paired, is that they have won in some notable contest. Such hobbyists believe that crossing one winner with another winner, regardless of the bloodlines they represent and the often varying purposes underlying their creation, must of necessity produce another, and even greater, winner.

The experienced fancier visualizing a certain type of bird he wants in his loft, usually relies on some worth-while form of inbreeding. His ultimate aim is to have an *individual strain* or family of pigeons, all members of which will have in common certain physical and mental traits requisite for fast, dependable, and long-continued flying. He may therefore buy from the most successful and efficient lofts a small number of foundation birds that have the characteristics which their offspring (the early representatives of the strain-to-be) are to possess in increasingly large proportions, and he proceeds to mate the latter according to plan. The degree of his success will be largely in proportion to the soundness of his plan—the common sense he employs in pairing up his most promising material. As already mentioned, E. Lang Miller produced a winning strain by judiciously inbreeding only half a dozen foundation birds for twenty-five or more years without once introducing foreign blood. Dr. Tresidder, noted English racing enthusiast, once stated: "After twenty years with one family (strain), I know of no short-cut to success. Since the physical structure of the pigeon greatly affects its racing ability, physical variation should be reduced to a minimum in order not to operate adversely on the mental factors. The crossing of different physical types may be a cause of failure when making a cross. I know a fancier who kept a loft of only ten pairs of old birds and never bred more than a dozen young from them. Sometimes he won all the old-bird races in his club from start to finish of the season. Why? Because every single bird he bred and kept was sound and bred from tried stock."

Only planned and well-considered inbreeding is likely to

bring success. It is the right selection of the breeders that counts—the pairing not merely of two high-calibre specimens, but of two more or less like-tempered, like-minded, and like-bodied birds, the one complementing the other in essential qualities. Many pigeon-men inbreed to certain so-called factors. It is this practice of highly selective forced mating for many decades past that has wrought such noticeable improvement in the racing-pigeon during the last twenty years.

In Belgium used to be many inbred strains which produced extraordinarily fine racers. Jurion, Delmotte, Hansenne, and Gournay, each had a distinctive type of pigeon, recognizable even today. English and American breeders also have their quality strains, founded on importations from famous Belgian lofts. The old English master, C. A. House, urged fanciers who wanted to establish a strain to keep their best dams, experience over many years having proved that good dams contribute more to the success of a strain than good sires. He maintained that since type comes from the dams, the continual introduction of strange females into a stud would never enable it to develop a type of its own.

In outcrossing, there is necessarily much guess work since birds of no common foundation blood are mated, with the result that the young represent a combination of numerous different parental factors. For one crossbred mating that is really successful, there are thousands that fail. Many so-called crossbreeders, owners of sizeable flocks of which they do not or cannot keep accurate record, actually inbreed through ignorance or carelessness. A good many fanciers condemn inbreeding (the breeding of closely related birds) because it tends to weaken physical stamina, to reduce the size of the birds, and ultimately to make them more susceptible to disease. A very consistent winner at the races follows the practice of not inbreeding to his own birds, but to add really promising stock from another strain which will supplement his own effectively to produce long-distance flyers. Naturally, there is much experimentation involved in such practice, its results depending on how successful he is in selecting the right strain to go with his own. However, if two winning strains are found which will interbreed smoothly and effectively, the offspring may prove to be not only very vigorous (for crossing usually makes for sturdy young), but they may also exhibit some of

the best qualities of either or both strains. Many authorities maintain that in order to improve a strain as a whole, variation—new blood gained through outcrossing—is needful. In other words, inbreeding even at its best can do little more than *just maintain*, but hardly enhance, the excellence of a strain.

Once you have developed a good racing strain which passes its general racing ability on to its progeny, it would be unwise not to inbreed, since outcrossing would soon deprive your strain of many of its leading qualities. According to J. L. Baker, well-known English fancier, inbreeding will improve your strain only if you have something really fine to which to inbreed. He cautions against too close inbreeding, such as mating brother with sister, or father with daughter, and then goes on to cite Dr. Barker's remarkable, winning hen "True Blue," as being very much inbred (!), her parents being almost brother and sister. Comments J. C. Doolittle, California fancier: "About 90% of my birds are bred straight. Each strain is a distinct family, line-bred for many years: uncle to niece, aunt to nephew and cousins are my favorite matings. I believe that line-breeding produces a greater number of really good pigeons and retains the good qualities of these better birds for a longer time." Quite a few fanciers have found brother-and-sister matings highly effective, though father-to-granddaughter and mother-to-grandson pairings are thought to be less risky. If the young produced show poorer coloring than their parents, smaller or thinner wing-bars, if the beak and the ceres appear rather colorless and lifeless, or if there is diminished fertility or stamina, the inbreeding should be promptly stopped.

In point of time actual breeding activities should be adjusted so that the birds will be in the best possible condition at racing time. Accordingly, birds to be entered in an early race will be mated long before those intended to fly in the long races. A fancier who wishes to fly both kinds of races is often advised to divide his birds into groups according to age and racing experience, and then to pair them up and train them for the short *or* for the long races. However, many a racing enthusiast lacks the necessary time and facilities to train separate groups. The exact time when breeding operations are commenced will of course vary with local climatic conditions. To quote Mr. Doolittle once more: "My stock-birds have been mated for years on March 1 and are separated by August 1.

My second round of youngsters (May rung) almost always prove to be the best. I believe the first round often do not raise true matings, which is one reason why some fanciers destroy the first-round eggs after about twelve days. It depends of course on the individual fancier's loft accommodations. Always let yearling hens raise at least one round of youngsters; otherwise they may go barren or be difficult to mate. I am very partial to late-bred hens, flown one hundred miles as breeders. Old stock-cocks produce good race-birds, provided they have not been overbred, are not prisoners, and exercise freely. Many flyers overwork a good producing cock. Three rounds a season, often only two, are my limit. However, do not make a practice of using old birds for stock."

As pertains training, practically no two experienced homer fanciers use exactly the same method. Much depends on the strain to which the birds belong, their physical development, their feed and general care, and, of course, climatic conditions. It is impossible, therefore, to lay down hard and fast rules for training. Some fanciers win races who give their birds little training and long jumps. Others who train their birds almost every day, win also. Most authorities, however, are agreed that overtraining is much more injurious than undertraining. One very successful old-timer trains his old birds at the 20, 100, and 200-mile stages, then jumps them to the 500 or 600-mile race. M. Stassart's training tosses were 15, 20, and 40 miles, followed by the first (100-mile) race. Thereafter forced exercise at home was given for about an hour each morning and evening. No training down the road between contests. He did not use single-tossing.

The intelligent fancier who really knows his birds will follow his own method of training—one patiently evolved after long effort. His system will be well adapted to the condition and the needs of his feathered charges, which he appraises carefully from day to day. And unless it fails to bring results for several successive seasons, he will continue to use it.

When it comes to training young birds, the following method, used by the well-known New York fancier Oscar W. Opsann, has been found successful: First of all, make sure that your birds know you well and are not afraid of you. Allow them the freedom of the loft for three weeks before you do any tossing; then basket them all together. First liberate them



one mile from home several times, then two, three, four, and five miles, so that they may become thoroughly familiar with their home surroundings. During all this time make sure that the birds trap quickly. Then toss them, always all together and several times, at 8, 10, and 15 miles, respectively. At 20 miles, toss no fewer than three and no more than five birds at a time, the idea being that the birds will zig-zag, trying to be the first to lead, thus gaining speed. When liberated in large numbers, birds so trained will leave the flock at once and start for home. At the twenty-mile stage, the hens are liberated first, the cocks last. During this training, flying about the loft, except in the evening for approximately ten days, is discontinued, the road-work being sufficient. Now the distance is increased to 25 miles, at which stage the birds are tossed several times in the early morning and late afternoon on bright days; then to 40 miles for morning and afternoon tosses. During all these tosses the birds should be carefully observed with a view to resting any that show fatigue. This training must be used four weeks before the race, birds being sent as far as 60 miles morning and afternoon on nice days. Two days before the race, the birds are given a toss of twenty miles in the morning and afternoon. During the period of intensive training, very nourishing food is given, such as peas, vetches, lentils, large brown maple peas, tick beans, and a little hulled oats.

While most fanciers train their birds in only one direction, that is in direct line to the race point, others will train up to five or ten miles in *every* direction because they wish their charges to be thoroughly familiar with their home surroundings from every direction, especially if in some race they should be forced off the main route or be tempted to overfly. Only birds in tip-top condition should be sent on training flights. The more careful notes the fancier makes and keeps on the performances of his youngsters, the more suitably will he be able to manage their training.

Among the noted authorities who favor single-tossing of young birds is the English fancier W. E. Barker. He advocates that each youngster be accorded not mass, but individual attention, which can be done only by single-tossing. While early losses among young birds are larger in single-tossing, the final losses are likely to be correspondingly smaller. Barker suggests liberating youngsters up to three miles first all together, then

singly. At subsequent stages they should be liberated singly, if at all possible, so that they may learn to depend on their own powers of orientation and "fly on their own."

The usual practice of exercising, training, and racing pigeons in flocks can hardly be said to teach them independence of action and initiative. But when a bird is left entirely to his own devices to find the way home and when he does so in good time, that bird is worth painstaking training. An independent flyer is usually game to the core and may be relied on to give a good account of himself in almost any race. One reason why the well-known J. W. Logan was able to develop such a remarkable strain of racers was that he eliminated any bird whose work did not meet his expectations. Sometimes an untrained bird will home from a long distance. Such a find is likely to make a valuable stock-bird, because apparently he is endowed with much homing sense. Mr. H. S. Jackson's Burgos hen (so an account ran in "The Racing Pigeon"), which was given him by M. Duchateau, flew twice all the way back to Belgium from London as a late-bred, untrained bird. This intelligent pigeon bred Mr. Jackson six high-quality racers which flew 600 miles.

The fancier should be on hand when the birds arrive at the loft to make sure of their trapping fast; he should call them to come and get their feed. Many fanciers are content with flying their youngsters a distance of 60 or 70 miles. Excessive flying during the first year may permanently retard physical development. Numerous of the most noted and efficient Belgian fanciers rarely train youngsters from their best long-distance strains until they are well along in their third season. Because they want these youngsters to develop into very strong and sturdy old birds, they give them very little training beyond four or five miles. The Belgians realize that to win in the young-bird races and in the long races requires almost two different strains of birds, and that each strain must have individual treatment. However, approximately fifty years ago, there was some young-bird racing in Antwerp, Belgium, up to three hundred miles, in which the so-called Antwerp pigeon, a strain large and rapidly developing but lacking endurance, was used with satisfactory results.

You can get your birds into the habit of flying almost at daybreak and also late in the afternoon by training them ac-

cordingly. Such a habit may aid them in winning races for you. As you know, pigeons, like most animals, are decidedly creatures of habit and you can hardly expect them to make a practice of flying very early and very late in a long race unless you have trained them so to fly. Training on cold, foggy, rainy, or stormy days is exhausting and therefore risky practice in which no real fancier indulges. Purposely to make flying hardship and drudgery is no sport. The thoughtful fancier takes advantage of the weather forecasts and sends his birds into the air only under favorable weather conditions when temperature and visibility make flying a pleasure.

Some fanciers give young birds small, easily softened and digested food when they arrive from the training tosses. The fancier should not let the birds, which are hungry, fill their crops to the limit. Groats, tares, and lentils are recommended on race-days, but not peas.

To train old birds successfully, you must know their weak and their strong points. If you keep careful record of the origin of your birds, their breeding, training, and racing activities, you will find it much easier to select the right old birds for training than if you were to trust to memory or to mere guesses, because then you know quite well how this or that individual racer has reacted to your methods in the past. Almost invariably, the successful fancier is he who makes it his business to know his birds individually so that he may give them all the special attention they deserve. Naturally, for the long races he will prefer those birds which already have flown over some part of the route, for flying experience and familiarity with the terrain help a bird in almost any contest. This does not necessarily mean that more or less inexperienced birds may not do well in long races, there being cases on record to prove this point, but in general it is true that the more experience, preferably successful experience, a racer has had, the more confidently, other conditions such as health, weather, etc., being equal, he will sail through the air homeward bound. While yearlings and even some young birds in excellent condition have won long-distance races, many fanciers prefer to enter only birds two or three years old which are fully mature in every sense of the word.

To provide the foundation for long-distance teams, two years hence, many fanciers in all probability require a substantial

number of their young-bird teams and should therefore decide very carefully just which members of the latter, taking into account health and strength, general racing qualities, past performance, and pedigree, are the most likely candidates for the long-distance team. The well-known fancier E. Lang Miller suggests two possible plans: either the young birds are flown in all the various races scheduled from 100 to 300, even up to 500 and 600 miles, or else the fancier flies his young-bird team so that as the races progress, he will, if he can, systematically retire certain birds, beginning perhaps with the 130-mile stage, so that he may set aside a few of his young-bird hatch for later use. If some of the races prove stiff, they are apt to reduce the number of likely long-distance candidates so much that he will know exactly which ones to keep and which ones to eliminate. He would hardly have a sufficient number of birds to add to his old-bird race-team. On the other hand, if he has a fairly representative number of young birds at the completion of the 300-mile race—youngsters which should be stopped at the 130, 150, and 200-mile stages, together with those having made the 300-mile race—he will then be in a position to select his number of required youngsters and set them aside for the following season. The surplus birds he can send to further races. As a result of this plan, which Mr. Miller follows himself, he has always had a fairly strong old-bird team, sometimes augmented by youngsters flown for short or long distances. The odds, so he opines, are all against the fancier attempting to race his kit of young birds hard every week-end through to the long distances, because one or two strenuous races may wreck his entire young bird-team and therewith his prospects for his future long-distance race-team. In reality, the young-bird and yearling stage is largely a training period for the long-distance racing. That young birds should be trained, not raced, is proved in Mr. Miller's opinion, by an analysis of race-reports, which usually show that but a very small percentage of the young-bird fanciers compete in the long-distance events.

In the final selection of a pigeon for long-distance races, the condition of its wings is very important. Comments a successful European fancier: "I do not advocate the ten-flights-aside. A nine-and-a-quarter wing with a safe next feather is what I like. I neither like a nine-and-a-half wing with prospects of the next flight coming, nor an actually full wing with the possi-

bility of one of the flights being thrown in the basket. I think birds will and can perform well enough with one flight short in each wing, so long as it is not beyond the fourth flight. It all depends on the individual bird and his disposition."

On the basis of careful studies of efficient wings of homing pigeons, Charles Galanie offers the following suggestions: the longer (from 23½ to 25 cm. plus) the flights, the better. The tenth flight should be as long as the ninth, or longer. When the wing is fully opened, the four end-flights should be well spread apart. The webbing should not be wavy, but have a knife-like edge. The feathers of the wing should be supple and resilient rather than dry and stiff. Straight flights are preferable to those curving inward. So far as the length (11 to 13 cm.) of the secondaries is concerned, the shorter and the more equal in length they are, the better. When the wing is opened, the secondaries should be in alignment with the flights. The last secondary should overlap the first primary, thus strengthening this portion of the wing. The wing-butts should be as thick—as well-feathered—as possible.

The moult begins by the throwing of the first of the primary flights, which usually occurs when the birds are incubating the second clutch of eggs, having raised their first nest of youngsters. Once this flight is fully grown, the next feather is thrown. By the time the fifth or sixth has been discarded, the moult extends to the smaller feathers covering the wings, including some of the secondaries, and later it includes the whole of the body. Of the tail feathers—there are usually twelve—the two (one on each side) next to the middle feathers are dropped first; then come the two middle feathers, followed in turn by the third and fourth on each side, counting from the middle; then the outside feathers drop and lastly the ones adjoining them. The moult may begin in April or May, when the first of the ten primaries is dropped. Within shorter or longer intervals, the moult proceeds until the tenth primary is thrown some time in November.

When moulting, racing pigeons should have extra care. M. Hansenne, of Belgian long-distance racing fame, would hardly allow his birds to fly in his loft, much less outside, during the moult. His policy was to rest them so that their feathers might grow well and fast. The most trying period of the moult is when the extremes, the last flight feathers, are growing. If the

bird's physical condition is in the least below par at this critical time, its body cannot supply the needed energy to nourish the extremes and must consequently grow weak feathers.

Particularly nourishing food should be given during the moult. Some fanciers give hemp and flax-seed in small quantities. Since wheat and tares tend to encourage, and barley to discourage, laying, the former grains should be fed sparingly during the off-season. Green food, sprinkled with a little salt, is relished by the birds, which should have ample opportunity to bathe during the moult. Usually it is best to separate the sexes at this time.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Fancy Breeds*

AMERICA MAY BE CALLED THE PIGEON LOVER'S PARADISE, FOR perhaps in no other country are kept as many varieties. Since practically every country's citizens have brought to America their native preferences in pigeons, this country boasts of an astounding number of breeds, gathered together from the four corners of the earth.

There are, as I have indicated elsewhere, more than two hundred different breeds or varieties of pigeons. It is generally acknowledged that the ancestor of all these diverse forms is the Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*), which is found in Europe, Central Asia, and China. According to Darwin, this pigeon agrees "in every essential characteristic with the breeds which have been only slightly modified. It differs from all other species in being of a slaty-blue colour, with two black bars on the wings, and with the croup (loins) white." He cites a Colonel King of Hythe, who stocked his dove-cote with young, wild Rock Pigeons in 1848. They soon became more or less tame and multiplied rapidly. Darwin concludes that all important domestic breeds of pigeons, "both when purely bred and more especially when intercrossed, tend to produce offspring of a blue colour, with the same characteristic marks, varying in the same manner, as in *Columba livia*." This tendency to reversion or "throwing back," found in all domestic varieties, and tested by Darwin in numerous experiments, is usually accepted as more or less conclusive proof that the Rock Pigeon is the common ancestor of the main forms of the domesticated pigeon. So far as we know now, the earliest domestication of pigeons took place in the fifth Egyptian dynasty, approximately 3000 B.C. Moreover, domestic pigeons are mentioned in Genesis, Leviticus, and Isaiah.

While some of the varieties to be described shortly, such as the Fantail, the Carrier, the Barb, and the Pouter have been the fancier's delight practically the world over for many a

century, others, including those few originated in America, such as the King, the Giant Homer, and the American Flight, made their debut not many years ago. You would think that among several hundred breeds, there would surely be a sufficient number to please every man's taste, but if you glance through the advertising columns of our pigeon papers, you are certain to come upon some new varieties.

However, the new breeds are seldom thoroughly developed and therefore lack essential qualities. As an illustration, a few years ago I purchased at a good price Yellow Kings belonging to several different strains. Their color appealed to me, and I was assured that, like most yellow-feathered pigeons, the Yellow King throws squabs having much lighter and tenderer meat than those of either the White or the Silver King. After a year's experimentation with the birds, during which time they were given every care, I disposed of them because they were very "unkingly" in that they fed their youngsters very poorly, frequently raising but one.

When I bought some Giant Homers from a well-known breeder, I found to my dismay that half of the squabs they produced were dark-skinned—unfit for the market. All of which leads me to suggest that before you pay out good money for a new variety of pigeons, which after all is but a crossing of existing varieties, endeavor to make sure beforehand that it meets fully your expectations. As a general rule, you will derive far more satisfaction and real pleasure from keeping a well-established breed, one which years of competition among fanciers have brought to a high state of quality, if not almost to perfection.

Wherever pigeons are bred extensively, the popularity of this or that variety rises and falls with the whims of fanciers and the passing of time. My reader should therefore be undismayed if on going through these pages he finds that this or that variety, which has risen recently to popular favor, is perhaps not as fully described as he might wish, since nobody can foretell the popular trend among the 20,000 fanciers we have in America today, and since space limitations forbid giving detailed descriptions of all known breeds.

In the United States of America, the squab pigeons—often called dual-purpose pigeons because they are bred for both the show-room as well as the market—have risen to great popu-



larity. At any important poultry or pigeon show you will find numerous White, Silver, and Blue Kings exhibited. In Germany, on the other hand, the color pigeons, often called German Toys, have been the favorite breeds with fanciers ever since I can remember; and in England so-called form pigeons have for centuries held the spotlight in pigeondom. As typical representatives of these two countries, one need mention only the German Swallow and the English Pouter.

In other words, each country has developed, and is still developing, those qualities of the pigeon which yield its fanciers real pleasure and perhaps some profit: the Belgian—racing ability; the German—color markings; the Englishman—form; the American—size and prolificness, and so on. The respective contributions made have depended not so much on the size or wealth of the country, but on the number and especially the ardor of its fanciers. Before the present war little Belgium led the world in the production of fine Racing Homers, for there the keeping and breeding of these intelligent birds was an intensive *national* sport.

It is not within the province of this work to catalog every known breed of pigeons, a task so ably performed by British and German authorities, but to present in word, and occasionally in picture, those varieties which for good reasons are likely to appeal to the average man who is really interested in pigeons, especially the novice. Pronounced changes have been wrought in the color, form, and size of the principal breeds of pigeons throughout the centuries. They become amazingly apparent from a close study of the pictures and descriptions of standard of model pigeons reproduced in such authoritative works as John Matthews Eaton's "Treatise on the Art of Breeding and Managing Fancy Pigeons" (1858), Robert Fulton's "Illustrated Book of Pigeons" (1879), James C. Lyell's "Fancy Pigeons" (1881), and many others.

The prevailing standards of the various breeds have been purposely omitted because they are subject to constant modification according to the whims of influential fanciers and the breeding aims of specialty clubs in the different countries. They may readily be obtained by writing to the secretaries of the respective specialty clubs, a list of which is usually found in the current issues of the pigeon press.

## AMERICAN DOMESTIC FLIGHT OR HIGHFLIER

A SLIM, graceful, though sizeable bird, the American Flight pigeon is a native of America. Its head is narrow, its white beak at least one inch long. Its large pearl-eye is encircled by a red cere. From six to ten primaries in each wing are white, the remaining portions of the plumage of this pigeon are variously colored.

Though of tumbler origin, the American Flight is nowadays rarely classed as a tumbler. In many respects it resembles the Magpie of the early days. An upright, streamlined appearance, suggesting that the bird is always standing at attention, characterizes the American Flight. It is bred in many different colors, the most attractive being black.

The American Flight, which tends to be somewhat wild, is very fast on the wing. Its great flying ability is utilized by racing homer breeders to train their birds in swift and in high flying. Likewise, roller fanciers use the Flight in training their young birds to reach high altitudes. And some unscrupulous breeders depend on the Flight to lure valuable birds from neighboring lofts to their own. In fairness to the American Flight it should be added that this handsome pigeon is not only a remarkable flyer, but an exceptionally dependable feeder and producer of squabs.

## AMERICAN SHOW FLIGHT

BY CROSSING the American Domestic Flight with the newly crossed Magpie, fanciers in the state of New York produced the American Show Flight about 1914. It is a slender bird of erect, racy carriage, strongly resembling the modern Magpie. Its head should be long and narrow, slightly curved on the back and at the sides. The flesh-colored beak should be long, thin, and straight. A small, single, red cere encircles a pearl-white eye. The neck of this pigeon should be long and graceful; the breast, round and full. The wings should be carried close to the body and above the tail.

The American Show Flight is bred in solid as well as mottled

colors. Moreover, both, plain-headed as well as crested varieties are popular. Solidly colored specimens must have ten white primary flights. Birds with black beaks, bull eyes, or defects caused by plucking are disqualified in the show pen.

Difficult qualities to achieve in breeding the Show Flight are a long, slender head, a pearl-white eye with a single cere, and freedom from foul flight feathers and general coarseness. Cumulet, Scandaroon, and other blood has been used to improve the Show Flight in these and other respects, though only with slight success.

According to William E. Ryan, the breeding of the American Show Flight is largely confined to the metropolitan district of New York City. Mainly responsible for the development of this beautiful pigeon to its present state of quality is the Brooklyn Pigeon Show Flight Association, perhaps the oldest organization of its kind in existence. This alert body, whose members breed the Show as well as the Domestic Flight, has successfully promoted popular exhibitions of both breeds for the past eighteen years, at which birds are judged according to the standard of the American Highflyer Pigeon Association.

## ANTWERP

BETWEEN 1850 and 1855, some fanciers in England sent pigeons to Belgium in exchange for Antwerp pigeons. The fanciers of both countries then crossed the pigeons they had received with their own, the English crosses being known as "Flying Carriers" and "Dragoons," the Belgian as "Antwerps." Even today there may be found in many of the best Antwerp lofts definite traces of the old English Dragoon as well as of the Carrier. The Antwerp appeared first at English shows in 1860, English fanciers having taken a great liking to this strong bird, whose form they soon improved decidedly.

Today the Antwerp, a bird of bold, upright bearing, is no longer used for flying, but solely for exhibition. Its outstanding properties are the head and beak. According to the length of face, measured from the center of the eye to the tip of the beak, there are short-faced, medium-faced, and long-faced Antwerps. The short-faced birds should measure 1½" from the center of the eye to the tip of the beak; the medium-faced, 1¾", and the heavy-faced over 1¾". Length of face in an Ant-

werp is very desirable, since a shallow skull makes a bird look longer in face than it really is.

A very important property of the Antwerp is the formation of its head, which should be massive—in the short-faced birds, circular; in the medium-faced and long-faced ones, oval. The beak in all varieties should be short, thick, blunt, and black. The wattle should be small and smooth; it should not rise above the curve of the skull. The eye, which is blood-red, should be large and bright. The neck, fairly short and thick, tapering gracefully from head to shoulders. The throat, full and without gullet. The body, large and shapely, with deep breast and broad chest; the shoulders prominent and broad; the back long and straight. The flights should be broad, short, and rest on the tail closely folded. The tail should be short and carried slightly above ground. The legs, stout, medium-long; the feet, deep red.

Antwerps are bred in various colors. Very popular are the silver-duns, being a delicate, creamy white, with powder-white head, a deep, lustrous, coppery-bronze breast, and broad, deep-red or dark-brown, single bars. The red checkers have a dark red head; neck and chest a deep, lustrous red; body and wings evenly red-checked on a ground color of clean dun; tail and flights almost white, with broad, single bars of dark red. Other colors are blue checkers and black checkers. As is true of short-beaked pigeons in general, feeders must be kept to rear Antwerps in numbers.

#### ANTWERP SMERLE

THE FANCIER who wishes a reliable breeder and feeder which needs but little attention should give the Antwerp Smerle, developed to a high state of quality by British fanciers, serious consideration. It is as large as a medium-sized racing homer and marked like a turbit, that is white except for the wing coverts—altogether a very attractive pigeon.

A compact, tight-feathered, black-eyed pigeon with full chest, broad back, and close-fitting wing butts, the Antwerp Smerle should have a strongly arched head with a stout, fairly long beak, topped by a smooth, fine wattle. Its legs should be coral red and sufficiently long to keep the bird's tail off the floor when the bird is standing properly. The frill, which is

split into two parts at the top, and which should be very long, should grow wider in the chest, culminating in a "rose."

The Antwerp Smerle is bred in England in the following colors: black, dun, red, and yellow; blue and silver with black bars; mealy with red bars; cream with yellow bars; and, finally, in various laces and checkers.

### ARCHANGEL

ONE OF the most brilliant representatives of the color pigeons is the Archangel—a small, racy bird, whose slender and graceful bearing it is a joy to behold in any loft. Some authorities maintain that its native land was Russia, as suggested by the pigeon's name; others, that it was Southern Germany and Tyrol, where the Archangel was exceedingly popular for a time. Lyell opines that the name is derived from the metallic lustre on the bird's back and on its wing feathers, since it is very much like that shown by painters on the wings of the heavenly archangels! This breed was first kept in Germany in 1820. It was not introduced into England until 1839, when Sir John Sebright purchased several pairs in Ghent.

Being little, the Archangel has a small, long head, from the base of which rises usually a high, needle-point peak. The straight, horn-colored beak is long and slim, topped by small, close-fitting wattles. The eye, enclosed by a cere of coral tint, should preferably be a deep, rich orange so as to enhance the brilliant coppering of head and neck. Dull eyes are ugly, and pearl eyes constitute a serious defect.

The popularity of the Archangel stands or falls with its lustrous plumage colored bronze and black. The bronze runs from the crown of the head down the neck, breast, and thighs, covering the elongated feathers under the tail. Its shade should be uniform, showing the same depth of color underneath as on the breast and neck. Frequently youngsters from the same parents turn out light and washed out, whereas others are darker but lustreless. Those with a strong purple tint in the upper part of the neck and head should not be used for breeding. The bronzing of the Archangel should be bright and evenly shaded throughout so as to contrast as much as possible with the black portions of the plumage.

Deep black should be the back, wings, and tail. Slaty-blue

tails and gray or bluish-black wings are sure signs of inferior strains. When closed, the flight feathers should be black, even though slatiness here is not a major fault. When spread, the inner webbing should be chestnut bronzed, not ashy or blue.

The plumage of the Archangel must have lustre. Of the three shades of lustre—red, green, and purple—the red should appear only on the bronzed parts; the green, preferably a brilliant green, should enrich the black of wings and back; purple should not appear at all. Green-necked specimens should never be mated so as to avoid overemphasis of this defect.

In America only two classes of this handsome pigeon are recognized: the light bronze and the dark bronze. This is regrettable since Germany, for instance, recognizes at least a dozen exceedingly showy subvarieties, which fact proves the splendid possibilities for color breeding which the Archangel affords. One of the most striking of these subvarieties has wings, rump, and tail blue, while its wing-tips and tail-bar are bluish-black. The remaining portions of the bird show a reddish bronze, not coppery bronze. Other varieties, with either plain or crested heads, have white wings with reddish-brown bars. In Germany also is found the Gold Archangel, its entire plumage, except for black wings, a soft yellow. A subvariety of the Gold or Yellow Archangel has black wings with white tips; another, which is plain-headed, has blue wings.

Owing to its smallness, the Archangel will thrive in a small enclosure, where gentle treatment will soon tame it. Being a splendid breeder and dependable feeder, this brilliantly colored pigeon of sturdy physique adapts itself readily to rigorous climatic conditions. Its lively, graceful manner and handsome plumage combine to make it one of the most delightful pigeons for any fancier.

## BARB

ONE OF the oldest varieties of pigeons and one which has changed little during the three or four centuries it has been bred in continental Europe, though an unsuccessful attempt was made at one time to cross it with the short-faced Antwerp, is the Barb or Barbary pigeon, so named after the country of its origin. Shakespeare mentions it in some of his writings. To England the Barb was first imported from Southern France,

where it was called the Polish pigeon, while the Germans called it the Indian pigeon. It is hard to explain these two names. Formerly the Barb belonged to the toy varieties.

There are three show properties for which the Barb, a medium-sized bird of cobby and erect appearance, is bred, and without which in well-developed form it is not of much value: large, spool-shaped head, including the frontal or "muzzle"; the eye with a hard cere; and the stout, frog-mouth beak set at an angle of forty-five degrees.

The Barb's head should be large, broad in front, neither angular nor flat on top, and gradually round away into the neck at the base. (Old English pigeon books mentioned a crested Barb which existed for a long time.) The beak should be short, thick, slightly curved, and wide at the gape. Upper and lower mandibles should be of equal thickness and of light horn color. The eye, one of the special charms of the Barb, should appear clear-white around a dark pupil, what is sometimes called "fish-eyed." The cere should be large, perfectly circular, nicely laced, and coral red. Moreover, it must not be flabby, and stand well away from the skull. A faulty cere, either in color or formation, is a serious fault.

The neck should be short and thick, gracefully tapering from head to shoulders. The body, rather long in proportion to the neck, should be of medium size. The breast, broad, full, and prominent, somewhat boat-shaped in style and carriage, with well-curved wing butts and flights in proportion to the size of the bird. The tail should be rather short. The legs should be featherless from the knees down and just long enough to carry the body gracefully without making the bird appear squatty.

The Barb is bred in black, red, yellow, dun, and white. Moreover, there are three shades of dun colored Barbs—light, medium, and dark.

In breeding this short-faced and rather odd-looking pigeon, the fancier must carefully aim at the proper formation and substance of the beak and beak wattle—most difficult qualities in the Barb. Proper skull and eye can usually be obtained by the use of birds of large size which have large heads. Specimens with soft, velvety eyes are commonly used when quick growth and increased size of eye-cere are wanted.

Comments a long-experienced breeder of Barbs: "Among

your young Barbs you will have a large percentage of 'duffers,' which you should discard promptly. If you can bring yourself to discard 75% of your first season's youngsters, you will save yourself much time and trouble later. Do not use birds for breeding which have a gullet, a crest, or feathers on their legs."

Since black is the most popular color among Barb breeders, it is very common to match two blacks, with at least one of the pair having a clear, flesh-colored and stainless beak. The finest red and yellow Barbs are usually produced by first matching good reds and yellows. Two reds or two yellows obtained from such a cross and matched well produce in most cases the desired red or yellow. Ordinarily it is safe to pair duns with birds of any other color.

Barbs are hardy pigeons, good feeders, and prolific breeders. Usually they go to nest again before the youngsters are properly matured. Moreover, the structure of their beak prevents them from feeding their young satisfactorily when these are about ten days old. It is necessary, therefore, to use feeders of the homer type for Barbs, or else to feed the young squabs by hand.

The work of breeding and showing a stud of Barbs requires time, skill, and patience. It is a most delightful hobby, affording the fancier ample opportunity to test his skill and ingenuity in developing high-grade birds.

#### EXHIBITION-PIGEON (DEUTSCHE SCHAUTAUBE)

VERY POPULAR in Germany is the Exhibition-Pigeon. Developed since 1907 from the racing homer, this pigeon is now being bred and exhibited in that country in ever-increasing numbers. It is largely, if not entirely, a show pigeon. The Exhibition-Pigeon has practically all the characteristics of the racing homer, except that its shape is somewhat more slender and its bearing more graceful; hence the name. The standard provides that this variety should in form, size, and plumage appear like a well-bred and alert flying pigeon.

Some of the more important requirements of this variety call for almost horizontal carriage of a well-developed but not plump body. The gently curved head, which to the casual observer shows slight resemblance to that of the Show Homer,



should be rather wide above the eye. The beak should be of medium length and black in all specimens except the light-colored ones, in which it should be horn-colored. The Exhibition-Pigeon's eyes should be large, slightly protruding, and have that alert look so characteristic of a racy flying pigeon. The eye-ceres should be gray. The neck, tapering toward the head, should be carried almost straight up. The bird's wings should be broad, carried close to the body, with the butts slightly protruding. The tail should be short, small, and extend somewhat beyond the wing-tips. The legs should be strong, free from all feathers, of medium length, and red. The plumage should be smooth and tightly feathered.

The Exhibition-Pigeon is bred in many different colors, the only requirement being that the ground color of each specimen be clean throughout and well distributed over the body. Disqualifying faults are a plump or else too long body, too low or too high station, an angular head, white or "broken" eyes, and red eye-ceres. Like all homers, this breed is an excellent feeder. Undoubtedly it will not be long before some enterprising lover of beautiful homers will import some specimens and give this interesting and very handsome breed a running start in America.

## CARRIER

### *English Carrier, French Carrier (Bagdette)*

"THIS BIRD is esteem'd, by the Gentlemen of the Fancy, as the King of Pigeons, on the account of its Beauty and great Sagacity; for which reason Mr. Hickman, a distiller in Bishops-gate-street (not the family of the lying Hickmans!) when living, always kept a valuable hatchet and block, on which he decently chopped off their heads, alledging, that being of the royal blood, they ought not to die after the same manner as the vulgar herd." So wrote Moore, the great English pigeon authority, in 1735.

The Carrier, a typical wattled pigeon, originally came from Bazora in Persia. It derives its name from the fact that it was used to carry messages. Daniel Girtin in "The Complete Pigeon Fancier" (1802), in commenting on the intelligence of the Carrier says:



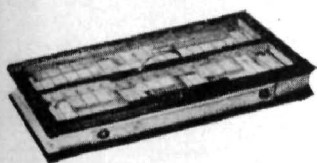
A



B



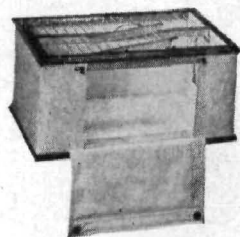
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D



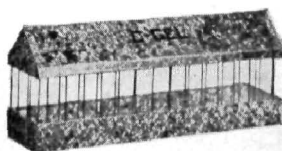
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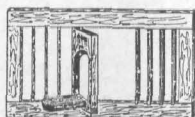


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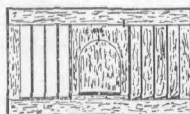
A. Crock Water Fountain with Wire Guard; B. Automatic Feeder; C. Feeder or Fountain with Raised Center; D. Training Basket (closed); E. Combination Summer and Winter Drinking Fountain with Upper Water Container and Lower Oil Container; F. Racing Training Canvas Basket (open); G. Wooden Nest Bowl; H. Sanitary Feed Trough with Removable Top and Bottom; I. Bath-pan of Galvanized Iron;



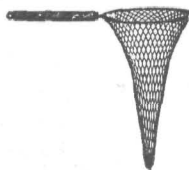
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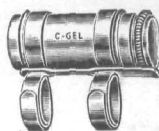
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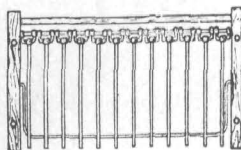
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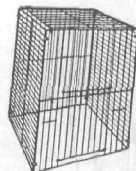
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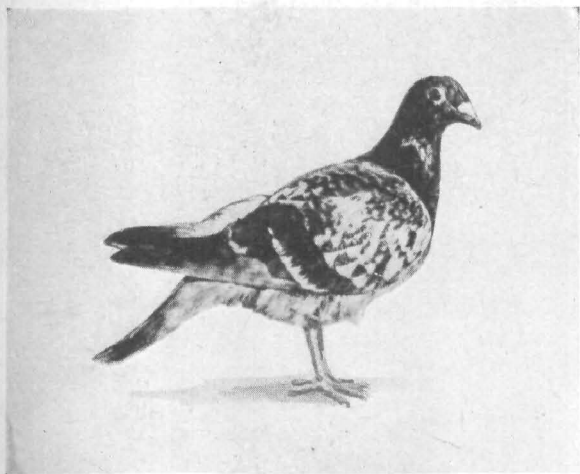


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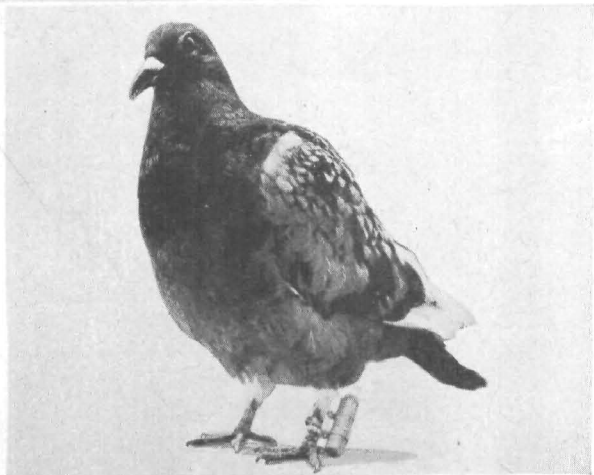


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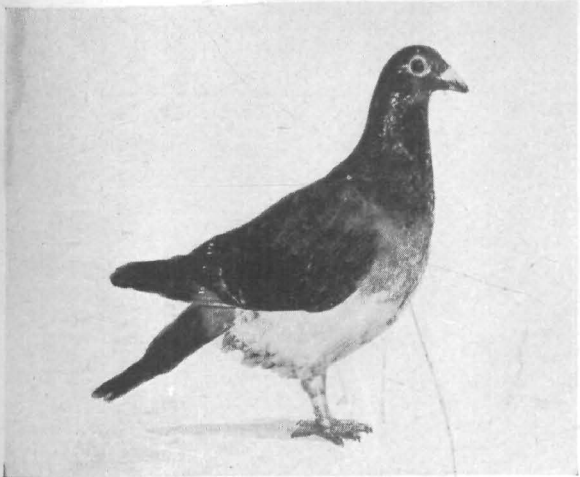
J. Shutter Nest Front (open); K. Wooden Perch; L. Shutter Nest Front (closed); M. Pigeon Catching Net; N. Celluloid Mating Bands; O. Message Holder; P. Racing Trap with Cast-aluminum Bobs; Q. Individual Collapsible Training Coop.



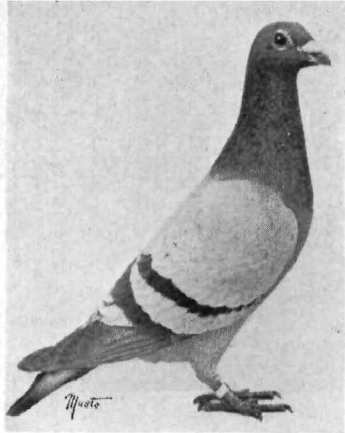
37 "BIG TOM," FAMOUS  
WORLD WAR I RACING  
PIGEON.



38 SAFELY BACK FROM  
THE TRENCHES WITH  
MESSAGE IN THE CAR-  
RIER!

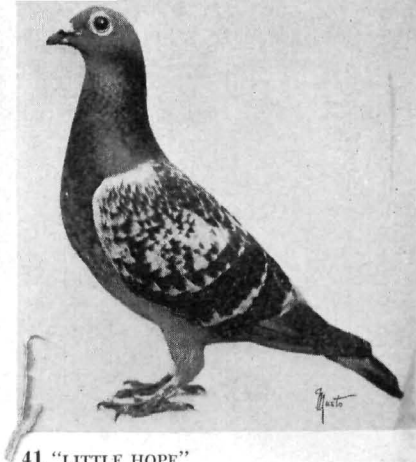


39 "PRESIDENT WILSON,"  
ANOTHER HERO OF  
WORLD WAR I.



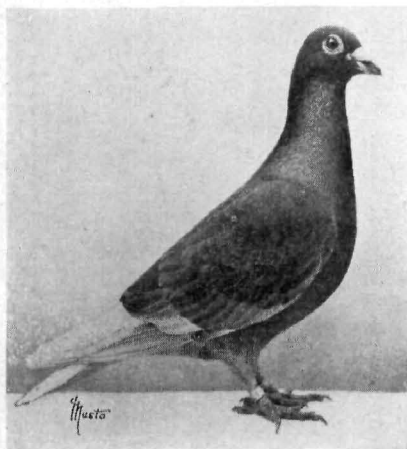
#### 40 "TRUE BLUE"

Twice awarded N. H. U. Gold Medal for winning London North Road Combine Race (593 miles) two years in succession. "TRUE BLUE" was first bird into London in second race by  $2\frac{3}{4}$  hours! Bred and raced by Mr. A. E. Sheppard of Woodford, Essex. (Photo, Musto, Leytonstone)



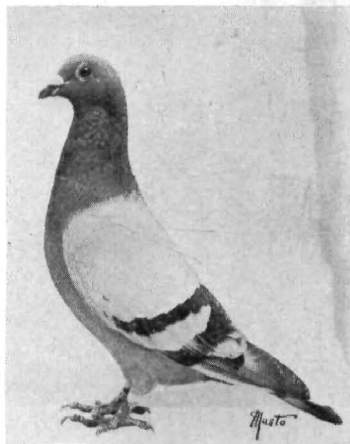
#### 41 "LITTLE HOPE"

This pigeon flew for 3 years in First World War Service, making 153 journeys, carrying important messages, and probably saving many lives. Bred by the late Lt. Col. A. H. Osman, O. B. E. (Photo, Musto, Leytonstone)



#### 42 "RED MAC"

Won first prize of £600 (approximately \$3000) in Dublin Pigeon Derby with 30,000 birds competing. Bred and raced by Mr. W. Howie, Kilwinning, Ayrshire, Scotland. (Photo, Musto, Leytonstone)

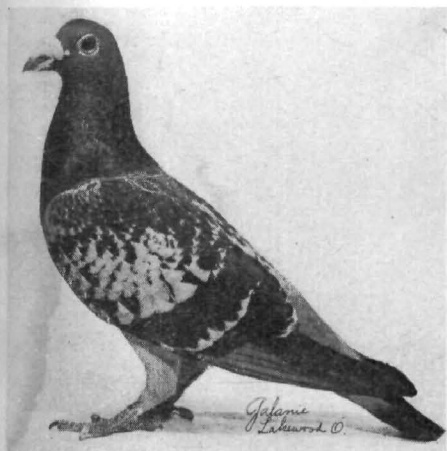


#### 43 "WESTON LAD"

1934 Winner of San Sebastian Race, flying 523 miles from San Sebastian, Spain, at velocity of 956 yards per minute. Among trophies won by this sturdy racer are the King's Cup and the N. H. U. Gold Medal. Owned by Mr. Vic Robinson of Southampton. (Photo, Musto, Leytonstone)

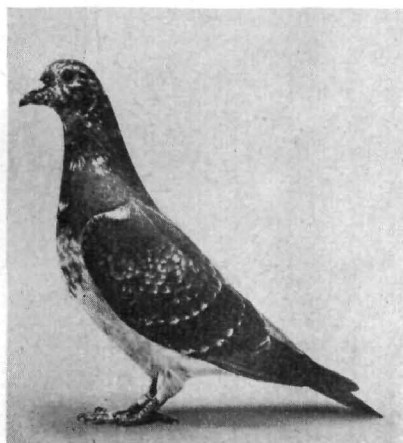


44 The late Lt. Col. A. H. Osman, O. B. E., explains points of first-prize winners to H. M., the King, then Duke of York, after the opening ceremony at London's premier racing pigeon show "The Old Comrades" in Bloomsbury. Behind them is Sir Edward Mountain, Bt., J. P., a leading fancier. The late Col. Osman headed the British Pigeon Service during the First World War. His son, Major W. H. Osman, is carrying on the good work in the present emergency. (Photo, Musto, Leytonstone)



45 "IMPOSTEUR" "2405083" B. CH. COCK

Bred and flown by M. G. Stassart of Brussels, Belgium. "Imposteur" won prizes at all distances from Noyon, Creil, Dourdon, Chartres, Angoulême, Bordeaux, Pau—several times each. He won second in Grand National Pau Race with over 3000 competitors. "Imposteur" is owned by Chas. Heitzman, Louisville, Ky.



46 "STARLIGHT LADY" OUTSTANDING WINNER

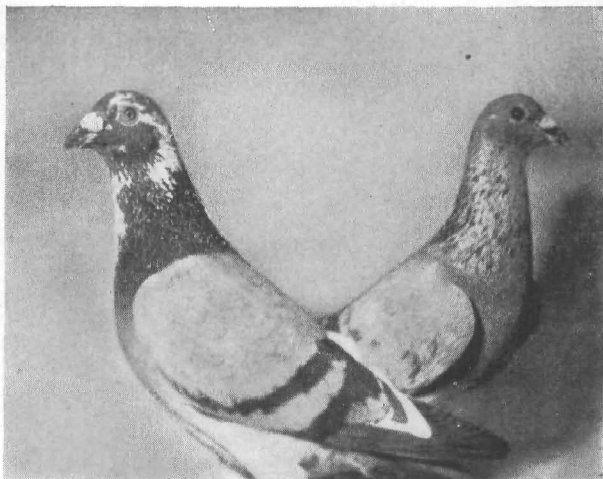
Owned and raced by W. R. Stamford, Wilkensburg, Pa.

**47 BLUE SPLASH C**

Pure Ulen strain—imported from Belgium and noted for ability to race long and hard.

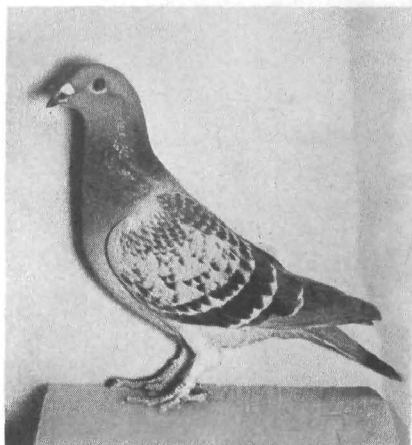
**SILVER C.**

Pure Wegge strain—imported from England. Birds owned by Mr. Lawrence S. Bell of Owings Mills, Md.



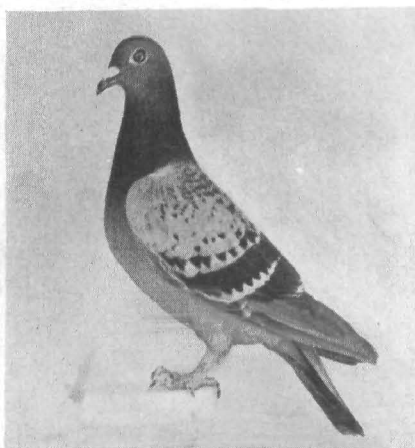
**48 "RED SAILS"**

Pure Grooter strain. Flown 75, 100, 150, and 265 miles. A consistent winner in many races. Bred and flown by Mr. Clifford Schwartz of Pine Grove, Pa.



**49 "5275"**

Famous Sion hen owned by Mr. Chas. Heitzman of Louisville, Ky.

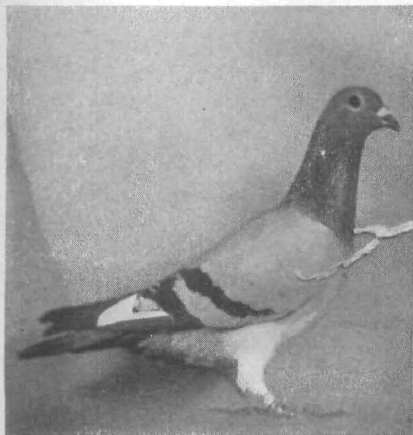


**50 "THE PEARLY-EYE HEN"**

M. G. Stassart, noted Belgian fancier, presented this outstanding pigeon, then a youngster, to Mr. Chas. Heitzman of Louisville, Ky.

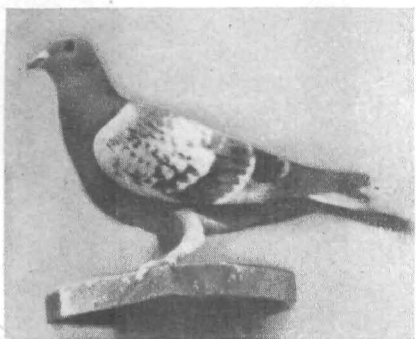
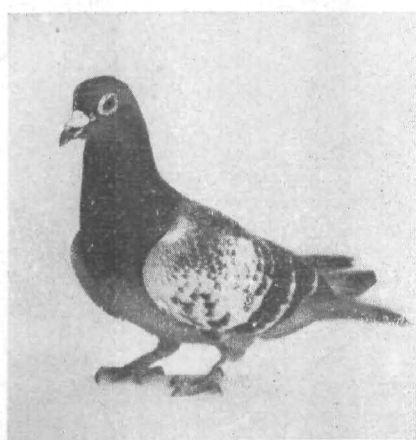
**51 "ARCTIC KNIGHT"**

Pure Cordis strain. In 1938 flew 165-250-500-1601 miles, winning 1st Diploma and being the only bird to return from this race, which started at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. Bred and flown by Mr. Robert M. Hawkins, Frontier Race Lofts, Oklahoma City, Okla.



**52 "MISS REPEATER"**

1940 A. U. Hall of Fame Winner. In 1940 won 600-mile race from Mumfordsville, Ky., at a speed of 881.47 yards per minute and ahead of next bird by 1 hour, 17 minutes! Owned and flown by Mr. F. G. Thon of Rochester, N. Y.

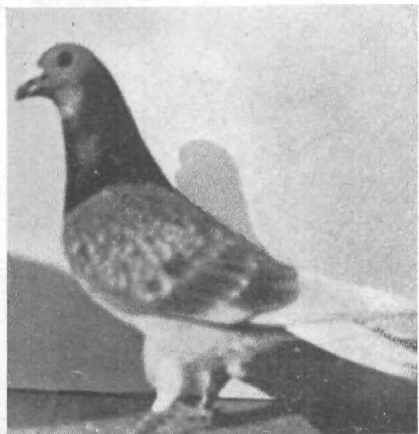
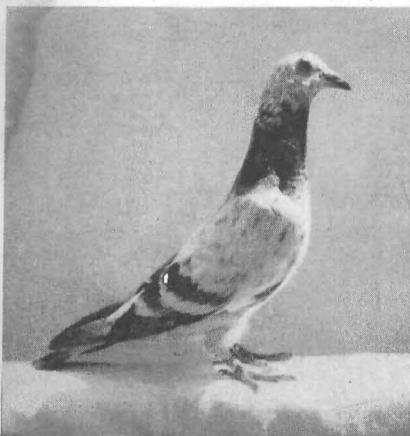


**53 "WICHITA"**

Pure Bricoux from the mosaic grizzle family of Dr. A. Bricoux. Owned by Mr. Robert M. Hawkins, Frontier Race Lofts, Oklahoma City, Okla.

**54 PURE HAVENITH STRAIN**

Cup Winner at 574 miles. Bred and flown by Mr. Carl J. Loeske of Bloomington, Ill.



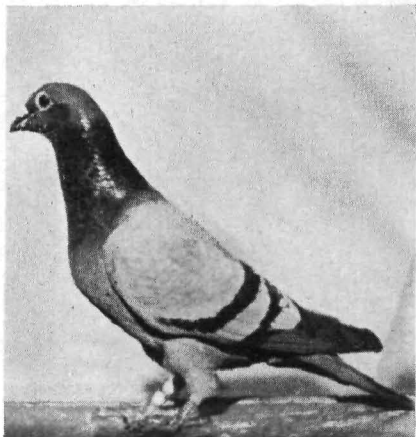
**55 "CHECKERS"**

Pure Osman strain. Flown 500 miles. Bred and owned by Mr. Ed. Wysock of Ludlow, Mass.

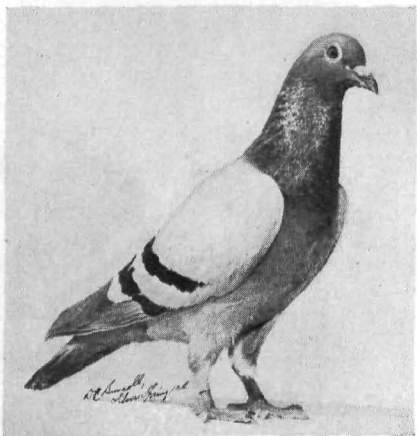




**56 Grizzle cock** imported from England by Mr. Joe W. Engel of Chattanooga, Tenn., who has developed a distinctive strain of Grizzles, all of which are descendants of the "National Winner of England" of 1931.



**57 "MILWAUKEE"**  
Pure Stassart strain. First Diploma at 150 miles, 1175 birds, 95 lofts competing; fifth Diploma at 200 miles, 335 birds, 149 lofts competing. Owned by Mr. T. A. Mitchell of Savannah, Ga.



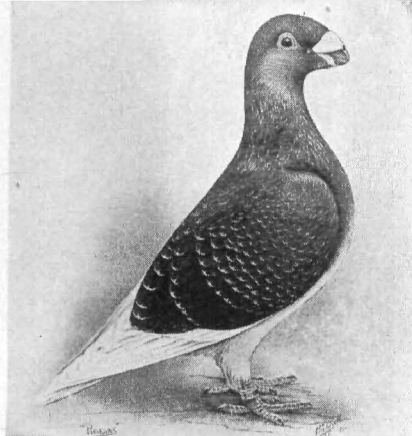
**58 "ANGOULÉME"**  
Of the famous Maurice Delbar (Belgium) strain. Imported and owned by Mr. Paul V. Veegaete of Fraser, Mich.



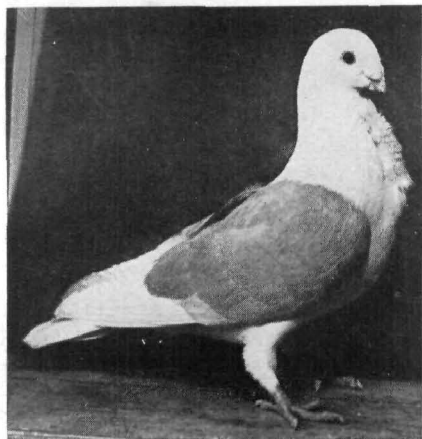
**59 "HOUDINI"**  
Blending of Stassart-Bastin-Sion strains. Won first Concourse Diplomas in three consecutive years, two at 500 miles, and one at 600 miles. Flown and bred by Mr. George Shilton of Philadelphia, Pa.



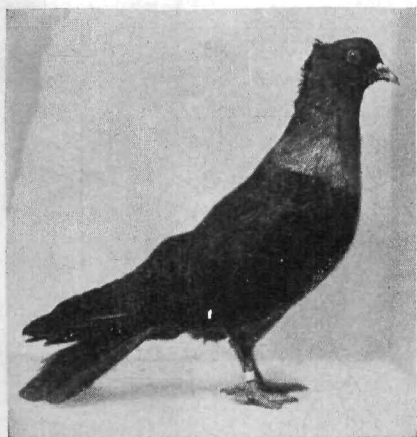
**60 AMERICAN DOMESTIC FLIGHT**  
*Bred by Mr. R. W. Donady, Long Island City, N. Y. (Copyright No. 19866)*



**61 SHORT-FACED ANTWERP**  
*Bred by Mr. Hubert Wright, Mayfield, Keighley, England.*



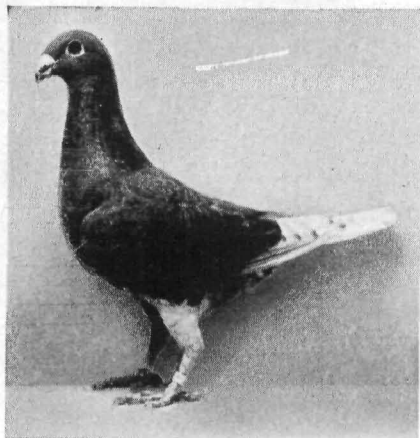
**62 ANTWERP SMERLE**  
*Owned by Mr. W. J. Rayner, Tilehurst, Reading, England.*



**63 ARCHANGEL** *Bred by Mr. Eger.*



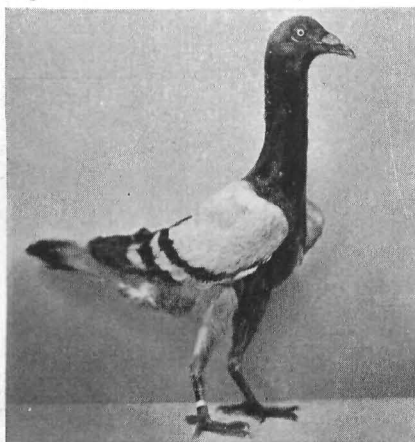
**64 BARB** *Bred by Mr. Patzenwahl.*



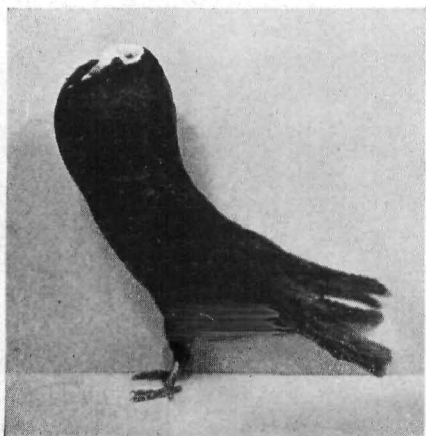
**65 EXHIBITION-PIGEON** (DEUTSCHE SCHAU-  
TAUBE) *Bred by Mr. Burghardt.*



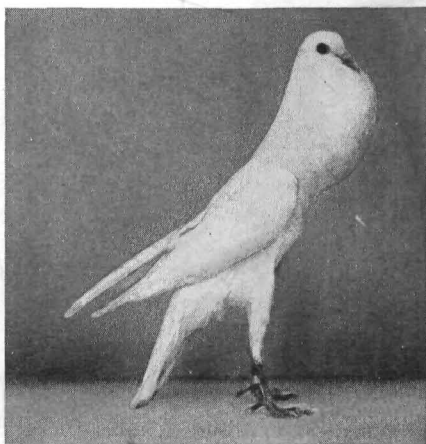
**66 ENGLISH CARRIER**  
*Bred by Mr. Berntgen.*



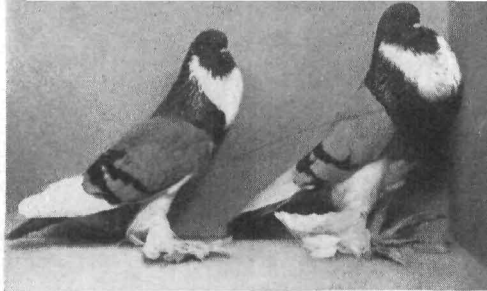
**67 FRENCH CARRIER (BAGDETTE)**  
*Bred by Mr. Landgraf.*



**68 BALD-HEAD CROPPER** *Bred by Mr. Weichelt.*

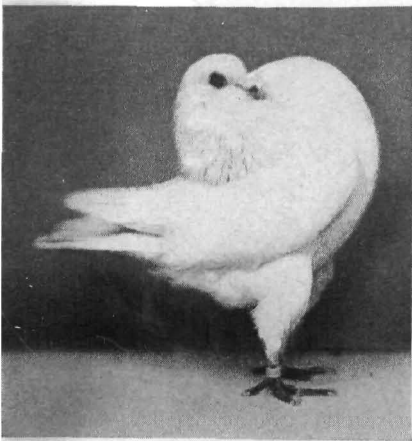


**69 BRUNNER CROPPER** *Bred by Mr. Krause*



70 GHEENT OR BELGIAN CROPPERS

*Bred by M. Albéric Pulinckse, Bruges, Belgium.*



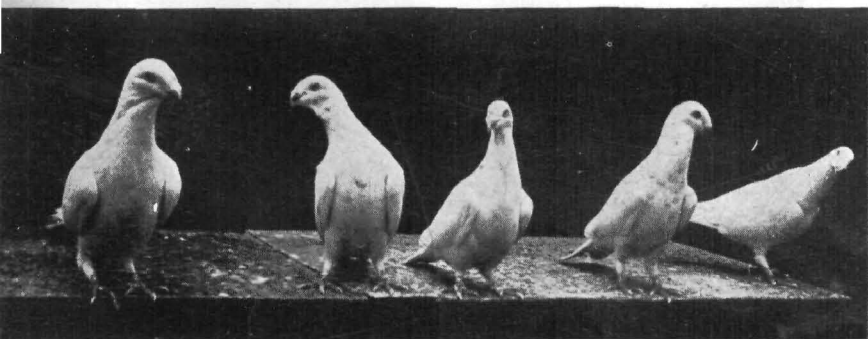
71 HOLLE CROPPER

*Bred by Mr. Pfeiffer.*



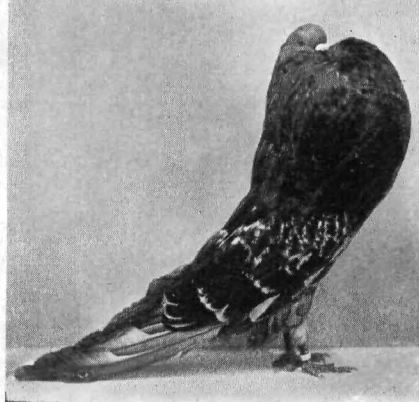
72 MAGPIE CROPPER

*Bred by Mr. Schröder.*

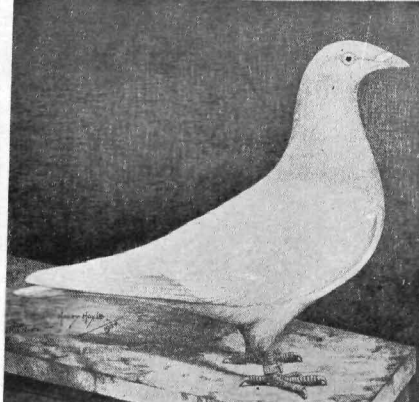


73 SHOW HOMERS

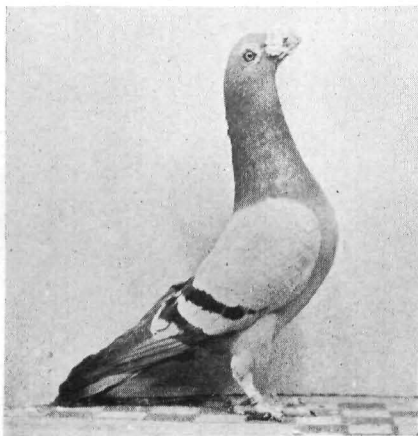
*A Group of Excellent Specimens. Bred by Mr. George Neuerburg of Los Angeles, Calif.*



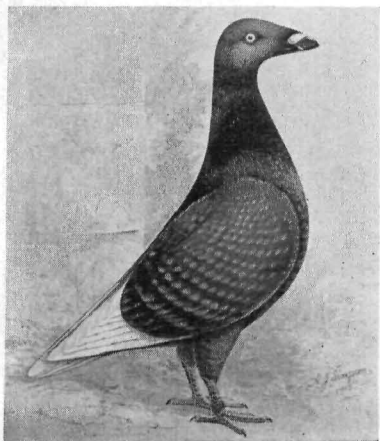
**74 OLD-GERMAN CROPPER**  
*Bred by Mr. Eichler.*



**75 CUMULET** *Bred by Mr. W. Proctor  
Smith, Chesire, England.*



**76 DRAGOON**  
*Bred by Mr. Roy Payne, Long Beach, Calif.*



**77 EXHIBITION HOMER (IDEAL)**

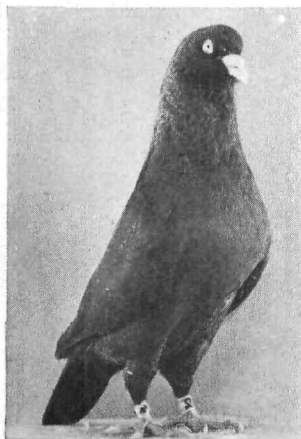


**78 FANTAIL** *Bred by Mr. F. H. Jarvis, Old  
Southgate, England.*



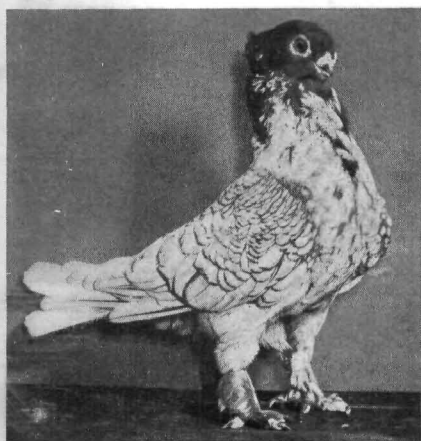
**79 CARRIER**

*Three times Grand Champion. Bred by Mr. Bob Volovich of Chicago, Ill.*



**80 RED CARNEAU**

*Grand Champion at 1940 Philadelphia National Pigeon Show. Bred by Mr. Adolph Besche of Baltimore, Md.*



**81 BLACK-LACED BLONDINETTE**

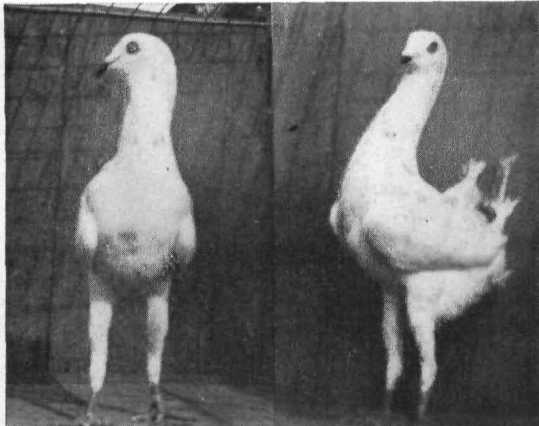
*Four times Champion Fancy Bird. Bred by Mr. John Ernst of Lincoln, Nebr.*



**82 NORWICH CROPPER**

*First-Prize Winner at 1942 N. Y. Poultry Show. Bred by Dr. Ralph Farmer of Long Island, N. Y.*





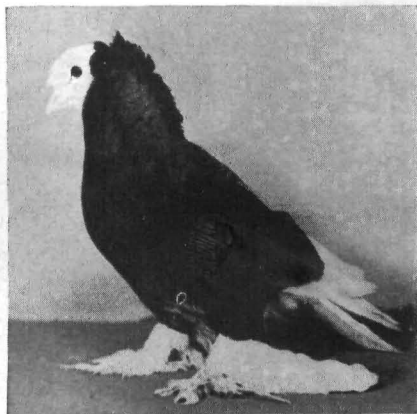
**83 MALTESE**

*First-Prize Winner at 1942 National Pigeon Show, Long Beach, Calif. Bred by Mr. Carl R. Johnson of Fresno, Calif.*



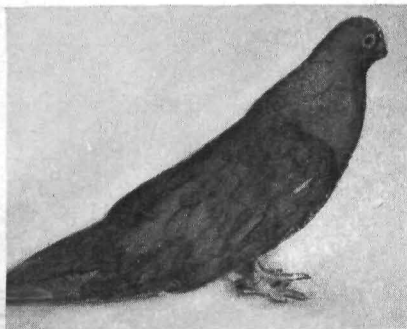
**84 DOUBLE-CRESTED GERMAN TRUMPETER**

*First-Prize Winner. Bred by Mr. Joseph Ettlinger of Long Island, N. Y.*



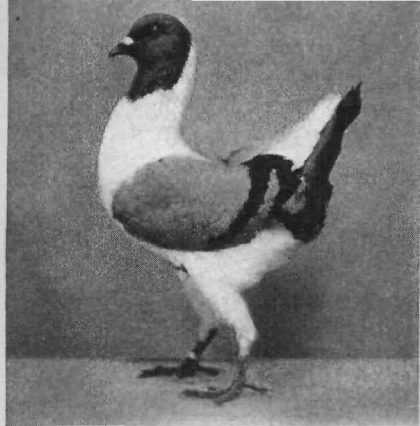
**85 BERNBURGER TRUMPETER**

*First-Prize Winner. Bred by Mr. Joseph Ettlinger of Long Island, N. Y.*

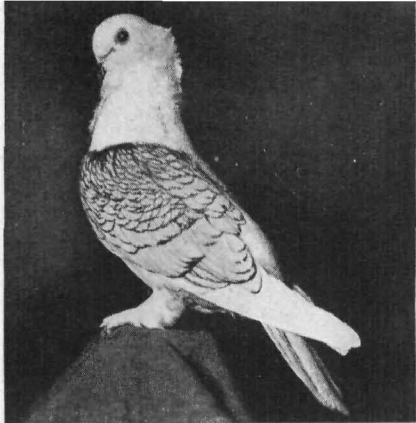


**86 EGYPTIAN SWIFT**

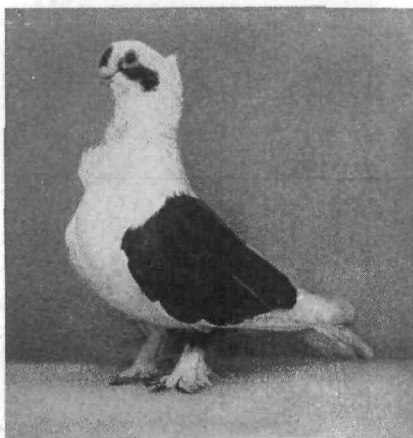
*Grand Champion at 1942 National Pigeon Show, Long Beach, Calif. Bred by Mr. Carl R. Johnson, Fresno, Calif.*



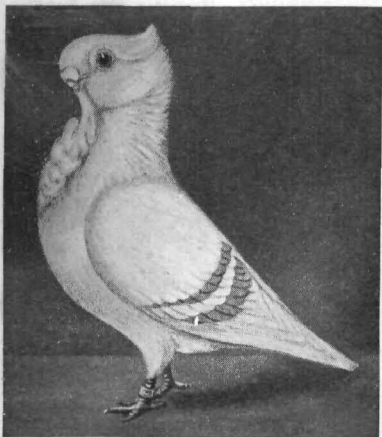
87 FLORENTINE  
*Bred by Mr. Dressler.*



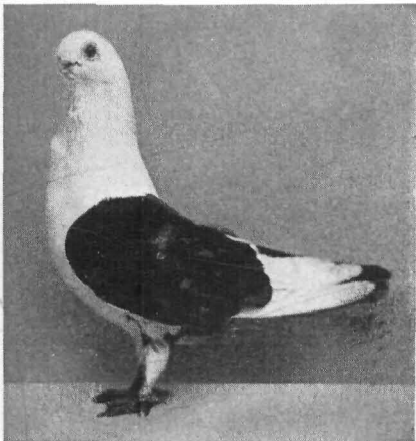
88 ORIENTAL FRILL: BLACK LACED SATINETTE  
*Bred by Mr. Frank W. Gorse, Needham Heights, Mass.*



89 ORIENTAL FRILL: TURBITEEN  
*Bred by Mr. Strucks.*

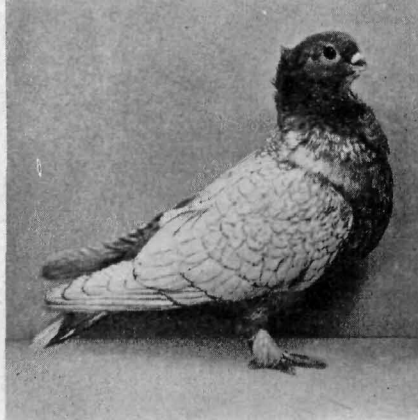


90 TURBIT  
*Bred by Mr. W. R. Lobb, Truro, England*

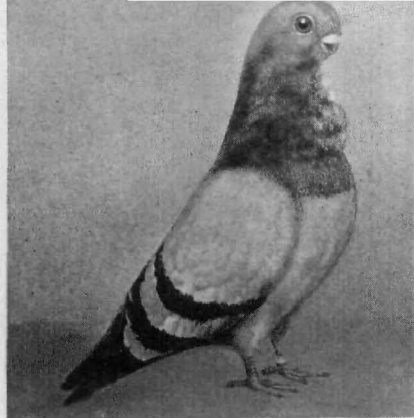


91 ANATOLIER  
*Bred by Mr. Suling.*

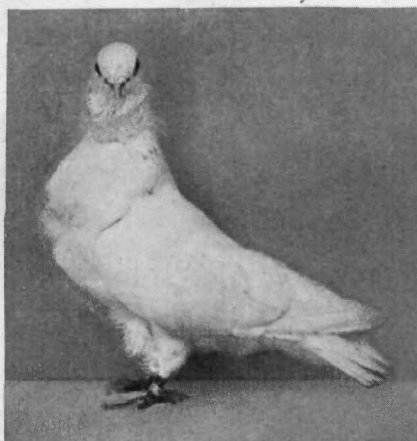




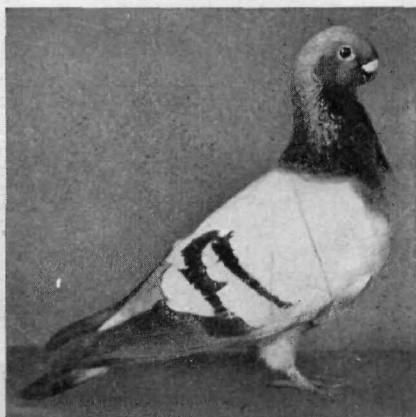
92 ORIENTAL FRILL: BLONDINETTE  
Bred by Mr. Bachmann.



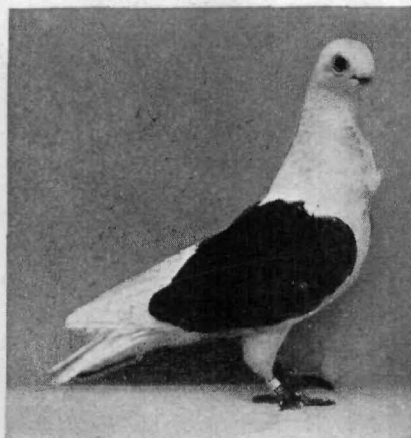
93 AFRICAN OWL  
Bred by Mr. Wm. Westhus, St. Louis, Mo.



94 CHINESE OWL  
Bred by Mr. Jügelt.



95 ENGLISH OWL  
Bred by Mr. W. Prince-Smith, Hillbrook,  
Keighley, England.



96 GERMAN FRILL (OWL)  
Bred by Mr. Flöricke.

"The winged messenger no sooner finds itself at large, than its love for its native home influences all its motions. It immediately flies up into the clouds to an almost imperceptible height, and then with great certainty and exactness, darts itself, by some unknown intuitive principle, towards its native spot, which is frequently at the distance of many miles, bringing its message to the person to whom it is directed. By what visible means they discover the place, or by what compass they are conducted in the right way, is equally mysterious and unknown; but it has been proved, by experiment, that they will perform a journey of forty miles in the space of one hour and a half; which is a degree of dispatch three times sooner than the swiftest four-footed animal can possibly perform."

Early English authorities were generally agreed that the Carrier is not an original breed but developed from the Horseman, which it resembles very much, except that it is larger and much better developed. The Horseman pigeons were regarded as noble birds in Turkey and Egypt, where they were bred extensively and used as message carriers for many years. It is said that the Horseman is an original variety, and that whenever English fanciers raised an especially fine pair of young Horsemen, they would keep them and call them Carriers.

For many years the Carrier was the most popular pigeon in England, having been developed there to a high state of perfection, which is the reason why it is usually called the *English Carrier*, there being also a *French Carrier*, both shortly to be described.

The *English Carrier* is easily recognized by the shape and size of its beak-wattle, which, according to today's standard, is like a walnut. It is this piece of pronounced ugliness which attracts the British so much to this queer-looking pigeon, and which equally repels the Germans. However, there is no accounting for tastes and fashions in pigeons or other pets.

Ordinarily three years are required to mature a Carrier. At the British shows, special classes for young birds used to be provided. According to Robert Fulton, "there are three stages in a Carrier's life, in all of which, if it be really a fine specimen, it challenges admiration in its own way. The first stage is at about six months of age, when the bird is especially attractive

to many, particularly the young beginner who imagines he has an almost perfect bird. The second stage is from the age of eighteen months to two years, when the bird begins to give promise of what it should be, yet is by no means fully developed in all Carrier points. The final stage is when the bird is fully mature, which is from three to four years, when he shows what the Carrier ought to be. He is now complete, and all that is required is to watch over him, to breed him with judgment, and to show him with care."

The present-day English Carrier differs from that of earlier times only in the shape of the beak-wattle, which was peg-shaped with the highest point at the back nearest to the head, and sloping forward to the end of the beak; but which now should be walnut-shaped, with the highest point in the center.

In breeding these odd-looking pigeons, the supreme consideration should be given to the beak, which should be long, straight, thick and blunt, close-fitting, of light flesh-color, with both mandibles of an even thickness. In the case of a thin beak, the growing wattle tends to bend the upper mandible out of shape, leaving a highly objectionable opening in the center of the mouth.

The walnut-shaped wattle should be soft, smooth, and of powdery-white tint. Furthermore, it should be closely woven, as large as possible, and of cauliflower formation. The bird's head should be approximately three inches from the end of the beak to the back of the skull, and flat on top. The eyes, which are deep-red in all specimens except the whites, should have radiating from the centers a large, thin, circular cere. This cere should be firm in texture, well-laced, pale, and rise slightly above the top of the head. The neck should be long and thin, straight and erect, showing neither gullet nor throatiness. Its thickness should be approximately the same at the juncture of the body as it is at the throat, thus appearing much longer than it really is.

The English Carrier's body should be wide, and rather full at the front. The shoulders should also be wide, and flat. The back, long and straight, sloping from shoulders to tail. The wing-butts, prominent—projecting slightly beyond the chest. The legs and feet should be muscular and long, well set apart, with the knee-joints being in the center of the leg. The toes

should be long, thick, and well spread out. The nails should be the same (flesh) color as the beak. The bird's carriage should be erect and alert. In the showroom, the small, refined bird should, other things being equal, win over the large, coarse bird. Serious defects are: bad coloring; peg-shaped wattle, thin beak, down-face, and fleshy cere. The chief colors are black, dun, and white, followed by blue, silver, red, and pied.

For obvious reasons the Carrier is not an easy bird to breed. Years ago, Carrier fanciers declared that it was a mistake to mate up Carriers before their second year, that if you wanted to produce a bird which would grow much beak wattle, you should use only old and fully developed birds for breeding. Today that advice is not followed as much. A beginner with English Carriers should not hope for much success during the first three or four years. He may be mating two really good birds and yet obtain unsatisfactory offspring. Once, however, he has found a pair of birds which turn out promising youngsters, he should keep this pair mated year after year.

Owing to their quarrelsome disposition and their inability to see well, English Carriers should be kept in a separate loft. This place should be roomy so that the young and weaker birds may readily get out of the way of older birds. Fulton classes Carriers as poor feeders and recommends homers and dragoons as foster parents. Too much emphasis on the somewhat abnormal wattling, which to me is anything but pretty, has reduced the number of English Carrier fanciers in America appreciably.

In a very informative letter to the present writer, Mr. Charles A. Bartling of Illinois, English Carrier fancier for thirty-five years, expresses the following views:

"English Carriers have been my choice for over thirty-five years. And though during this time I have kept very fine studs of many other breeds, the English Carrier is nearest to my heart. It is true, of course, that this variety is not the easiest to breed and that many Carrier fanciers use feeders. However, I have never used feeders, except in the case of a pair of youngsters not receiving proper care.

"My only reason for suggesting that a beginner start with English Carriers is that they furnish an opportunity for much study and pleasure, for it is a real task to breed a fine speci-

men. I should add here that once a Carrier fancier, always a Carrier fancier.

"The English Carrier is a large-bodied pigeon, in reality larger and heavier than he appears to be, for his feathers lie close and hard, giving him a very trim plumage. His most valuable property is the wattle, snow-white and about the size of a walnut. Only a real Carrier fancier can appreciate this property to the fullest extent. The Carrier's head should be long, shallow on top, and narrow between the eyes. The beak proper is long and thick; and to get the bird as straight in the face as possible is a difficult job, no matter how much wattle it may have. Moreover, even if an English Carrier has all the necessary requirements except the straight face, the whole picture of the bird is spoiled."

Little seems to be known about the exact origin of the so-called *French Carrier* (*Bagadais à grande morille*), a wattled pigeon of excellent size. In breeding this variety, the French pay marked attention to the development of a heavy bird with short wings and short tail, without bothering much about its carriage and color. The German fanciers, on the other hand, many of whom have bred the French Carrier (*French Bag-dette*) for thirty and forty years, are endeavoring to improve the figure and carriage of the bird.

Briefly, the French Carrier is a powerful, long-legged pigeon having a large head on a long, narrow neck with slightly protruding cervical vertebra; a long, strong, straight beak topped by a long, flat, whitish wattle; a broad breast and somewhat protruding belly; and a slightly hollow back. This pigeon carries its strong and not very long wings loosely with protruding butts; its tail is medium-long and carried almost horizontally. It is bred in black, blue, red, yellow, white, and various checks. Serious defects are a crooked, flimsy beak, short and thick neck, hidden cervical vertebra, and short legs.

Because of its shy and quarrelsome disposition, it is best not to keep this powerful pigeon with other varieties. As soon as the young French Carriers know how to feed themselves, they should be placed in a separate loft. To handle the French Carrier successfully requires great patience and to breed him true to type requires a thorough understanding of his peculiarities as well as the laws of inbreeding.

## CROPPERS

*Bald-head Cropper, Brunner Cropper, Ghent Cropper, Holle Cropper, Magpie Cropper, Norwich Cropper, Old German Cropper, Pommeranian Cropper*

THOUGH THE Cropper belongs unmistakably to the Pouter family, it differs decidedly from the latter variety in certain respects. The cropper's legs are shorter and straighter than the pouter's. The globe of the cropper is often as round as a ball and does not appear to be set off sharply from the body. One of the chief properties of the cropper is flight. Its action in flight is characterized by the head and tail going up and down somewhat similar to the movement of a rocking horse.

In the early days a cropper was not regarded as valuable unless he could sail through the air motionless, his wings raised. "A good bird," comments Lyell, "will sail along for fifty yards, gradually lowering as he goes; then, again using his wings with loud claps, he will rise as much as he has fallen, and go on alternately in this way till he pitches. There is certainly nothing in the whole pigeon fancy from which greater pleasure can be derived than from the flight of certain well-trained coppers, as for instance, the Norwich."

One of the oldest German breeds of pigeons, first popularized in Silesia, is the *Bald-head Cropper* (*Weissköpfiger* or *Gemönchter Kröpfer*). It is named after the white cap, which contrasts sharply with the black, red, yellow, or blue of all remaining portions of the body. The Bald-head also occurs in black, red, and yellow, each with white wing-bars, and in blue with black wing-bars. The plain black specimens are usually the finest.

The German Bald-head Cropper, which measures from fifteen to eighteen inches, is a lively and rather graceful pigeon with long neck, breast and back, as well as long wings and tail. Its legs are rather short, and clean. In breeding this cropper, marked attention is paid to the color, which should be as rich and deep as possible. The Bald-head Cropper is a very hardy pigeon and an excellent feeder and rearer of young.

In the Brunner or Austrian Cropper (*Brünner Kröpfer*) we have a long, clean-legged bird with slender body and large, round globe. In almost all properties the Brunner Cropper

suggests the Pigmy Pouter. Since its total length is only between 13½" and 15", it is truly a miniature cropper. This pigeon is an expert flyer, floating with spread wings through the air for long distances.

The Brunner Cropper occurs in all-white, black, red, and yellow. Moreover, there are many white-barred varieties. This hardy pigeon, which thrives on little feed, breeds often each season, rearing its young without outside aid. Its clownish ways and delightful tameness endear it quickly to its keeper.

The *Ghent* or *Belgian Cropper* has the distinction of being a truly ancient breed. It is a large, compact bird with a sizeable globe and almost horizontal body carriage. Its medium-long legs are heavily muffed. In raising Belgian Croppers, special value is placed on a broad breast with a deep belly, and a rather compact body. The broader the breast, and the shorter the body, the more valuable the bird. This pigeon is white except for the breast, neck to middle of crop, shoulders, back, and tail, which are colored.

The Ghent Cropper is found in the following self colors: white, black, blue, silver, dun, red, and yellow. It is also bred in the colors of the English Pouter. Since the Ghent Cropper is a good breeder, it requires no feeders. A lively and friendly pigeon, it can be quickly tamed and thus turned into a delightful pet.

Popular in its native Holland, as well as in Europe generally, but seldom seen in America is the *Holle* or *Amsterdam Cropper*. A rather low-standing bird, its dove-like head resting in the hollow (holle) of its back, this pigeon suggests the carriage of the Fantail.

A first-class Holle Cropper should have three principal properties: horizontal carriage, a loose, flexible neck, and a large, broad globe, which, unlike that of the English Pouter, does not look like a somewhat artificial appendage, but forms an essential part of the bird's body and aids materially in giving it the circular outline so much desired. As a matter of fact, few specimens of this breed combine these three qualities in generous measure. In other words, the Holle Cropper affords the fancier who has time and inclination ample opportunity to breed something really distinctive. The most difficult of the three properties is horizontal carriage, which the bird, with well-coiled neck dropping with graceful motion into the hol-

lowed back, must have especially at judging time. The standard requires that the globe be as large and as broad as possible, and evenly rounded. Ordinarily, the smaller the Holle Cropper, the greater its value.

Since the Holle Cropper has, owing to its somewhat peculiar carriage, difficulty in flying as well as in mating, it is best not to keep it with other varieties. German fanciers get satisfactory results from keeping each pair in a small compartment, where the birds may be individually cared for and conveniently handled. They let the Holle Cropper hatch and rear its young until they are from eight to fourteen days old, at which age they are given to foster parents. Since the fancier's aim is not to produce a fat or at all heavy young cropper, but one with a well developed "type" body, the feed used consists of barley, buckwheat, milo, and other small seeds.

The Holle Cropper is bred in white, black, red, and yellow selfs; in blue, silver, and mealy bars; in black, red, and yellow mottles. The most valuable specimens have been white. Red and yellow Holle Croppers are rare.

A cropper which, except for its smaller size and different markings, resembles the Bald-head Cropper noticeably, is the *Magpie Cropper* (*Elster Kröpfer*). From the tip of the beak to the tip of the tail the bird should measure approximately seventeen or eighteen inches. Special effort in breeding is devoted to developing a very long neck with a long, not round, globe, and to obtaining distinct magpie markings. One reason why this cropper is liked by many German fanciers is that it raises its young satisfactorily. A good pair of Magpie Croppers will raise from five to eight sets of youngsters a season. Those youngsters whose markings at five or six weeks of age do not conform to the general standard are promptly discarded to save the expense of feeding birds unsuitable for show purposes.

One of the oldest members of the cropper family is the *Norwich Cropper*, which was originated in the English counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. According to Lyell, "its markings, like the Pouter's, are found in several continental breeds of croppers, and the probability is that both our Croppers and pouters were gradually bred up from continental varieties, perhaps brought here by immigrants in the middle ages."

Among the more important standard requirements of the



Norwich Cropper are these: head, small, narrow. Beak, medium-long, with very small wattle. Eye, in colored birds, red or orange; in white birds, sloe. Crop, round and well curved, very large, breaking almost at right angles from waist, rising at the beak, well down between the shoulders, known as the back-crop, rising upward to the base of the skull, completing the circle. Crop must always be under full control. Flat-topped and one-sided crops are serious defects. Body, wedge-shaped, with shallow breast, straight keel; shoulders carried high and held close to the sides. Beak, short and hollow. Wings, reasonably long, close to body, showing upper part of waist and thighs. Tail, close fitting; in blacks and blues of the same color as the plumage; in reds and yellows, white. Legs and feet clean; to measure from three to four inches from inner setting of thigh to ball of foot. Knee joints to the feet should be entirely free from feathers, differing in this respect from those of the English and the Pigmy Pouters. Measuring from tail to tip of beak, the Norwich Cropper should not be longer than fifteen inches.

The Norwich Cropper is bred in black, blue, red, yellow, white, silver, and dun. Its crop is marked with a neat white crescent and a good bib below the beak. A few white feathers dotted on the shoulders furnish the rose wings. The Norwich Cropper is no longer bred for its flying ability, but for its large globe. It is a very friendly pigeon, which, though spirited, is yet easily tamed.

Comments Dr. Ralph Farmer, well-known Norwich Cropper breeder: "The excellence of a fine Norwich Cropper, which is a medium-sized, clean-legged pouter with a tremendous globe, depends on the harmonious development of all essential properties. Despite its sizeable globe, this pigeon should, when blowing and strutting, be well proportioned and well-controlled. Our latest standard provides for legs measuring approximately four inches from the inner setting of the thigh to the ball of the foot. A good specimen should carry its close-fitting tail just clear of the ground, so-called "tail-riders" being considered undesirable.

"Since the Norwich Cropper is a reliable breeder and feeder, no foster parents are needed to raise its youngsters. Moreover, this easily tamed pigeon may be kept in small quarters. It is bred in the following standard colors: blue, red, yellow, silver, and dun; rarely in black or white. The markings of this breed

consist of a neat, white crescent on the crop and of rose-wings, i.e., wings having a few white feathers near the center of each wing."

Except for its long globe, the *Old German Cropper* (*Alt-deutscher Kröpfer*) suggests the Runt, with which it has been interbred at various times for greater size and weight. The length of this cropper varies from eighteen to twenty inches. Characteristics of this breed are very long wings and tail, but only fairly long beak, and short, clean legs. Popular colors in which the Old German Cropper is bred include black, white, blue, and various checks.

In general appearance, the *Pommeranian Cropper* (*Pommerscher Kröpfer*) resembles the English Pouter, to which it is closely related. The outstanding difference between these two varieties is twofold: the Pommeranian Cropper is muff-legged and also much broader in body. His breast should be very wide. His globe should rise from the body gradually, and should not look like an appendant balloon. This Cropper is from twenty to twenty-one and a half inches long.

The highest-quality specimens of this breed are usually the whites. Other colors include blues and blacks with crescents on their globes; various checkers, and whites with colored tails.

Most breeders of the Pommeranian use foster parents. Quite often, however, they will let the Croppers raise one youngster. These pigeons should have a fairly roomy pen where they may exercise their wings freely and frequently, and thus develop the broad breasts which distinguish them from the English Pouters.

## CUMULET

A HARDY breeder and a vigorous high flyer, the Cumulet, a tumbler pigeon and one of the ancestors of the Racing Homer, is truly an ancient breed. It is a graceful, well-proportioned bird of medium size with full chest, powerful wing butts, long flights, and fairly short, clean legs. Breeders of the Cumulet lay special emphasis on a straight, white or flesh-colored beak, pure white eyes with fine, white ceres, and, of course, a soft, pure-white plumage. Some specimens have fawny-red spots on head and neck.

For many years past the Cumulet has been used successfully

by fanciers to improve the head properties of other breeds. Like other high-flying varieties, Cumulets are trained when they are young. Since they are dependable feeders and breeders, they are easy to keep and manage.

#### DAMASCENE

A PIGEON of oriental origin and of exceptional beauty is the Damascene, kept by a few discriminating fanciers in this country and in England, who regard it largely as a novelty. This variety is somewhat larger than the English Owl, which it strongly resembles in head and beak properties, the head being round and the beak short, down-faced, and black. Orange eyes surrounded by prominent plum-colored ceres and the mealy, bluish-white ("frosted") plumage with strongly contrasting jet-black wing-bars constitute the two prominent features of the Damascene's striking beauty. The under-flue of the feather is dark, as are also the beak, the feet, and the pigmentation of the skin. Robert Fulton praises the vivaciousness of the Damascene and suggests that it be afforded ample flying exercise, there being no danger of its straying from the home loft. French and German pigeoners all comment on the intelligence of this breed.

#### DRAGOON

A VERY popular variety, especially in England, of wattled pigeon is the Dragoon—a medium-sized bird of cobby, graceful, and commanding carriage. Many authorities contend that the Dragoon constitutes the parent stock of the English Carrier.

Moore regards the Dragoon "absolutely and without dispute a bastard strain, being bred originally between a Horseman and a Tumbler, and by matching their breed often to the Horseman (The horseman held a position between the carrier and the dragoon and differed from the carrier largely in that it came in many different colors.), they will obtain a tolerable degree of stoutness." In the early days the Dragoon was considered an excellent flier as the following excerpts from John Mayor's *Treatise on Pigeons* (1765) will indicate:

"A gentleman of my acquaintance, having a small wager

depending, sent a dragoon by the stage coach to his friend at St. Edmond's Bury, together with a note, desiring the Pigeon, two days after his arrival there, might be thrown up precisely when the town clock struck nine in the morning, which was accordingly executed, and the pigeon arrived in London, and flew to the sign of the Bull Inn in Bishopsgate Street into the loft, and was there shewn at half an hour past eleven o'clock the same morning on which he had been thrown up at St. Edmond's Bury, having flown seventy-two miles in two hours and a half; the wager was confirmed by a letter sent by the next post from the person at St. Edmond's Bury."

Fulton says that a Dragoon should be nearly as large as a Carrier, and should have perfect symmetry. The formation of the wattle should differ entirely from the Carrier's: it should be all one piece, not divided in three, or of a cauliflower appearance, but smooth. At two or three years' age, the wattle should not at the highest point be above the level of the top of the skull. A Dragoon should be a Dragoon as long as he lives, and not become a Carrier when getting old! The Dragoon, moreover, should be entirely devoid of wattle on the lower mandible.

The Dragoon is valued not so much for color and markings as for its type, and particularly the formation of its head, which should appear wedge-shaped—beak, wattle, and head. Of prime importance also is the beak, which should be stout and blunt. Very highly valued is the beak setting. The incision of the mouth should be on a line with the bottom of the eye. If a horizontal line were drawn through the mouth, it should appear just below the eye. On top, the skull should be as wide as possible, especially between the eyes, gradually tapering towards the front. The eye should not be sunken, but prominent; in white birds it should be dark in color or "bull"; in colored specimens it should be a deep red.

The distance from the top of the head to the top of the eye should be approximately one-third the distance of the skull. The distance between the eye and the back of the skull should be approximately one-third the distance from the back of the head to the tip of the beak. The eye cere should be fairly small, fine, have a powdery bloom, and be the color of a damson—a dark purple—in blues, checkers, grizzles, and silvers, but flesh-colored in reds, yellows, and whites. The skull should be

deep, showing a strong muzzle. The beak wattle should be peg-shaped. The neck should be short and thick; the breast, broad and full; the back, broad and flat; the wing butts and shoulders prominent. The wings should be strong, with the flights carried above the tail; the tail, short, closely folded, and extending one-half inch beyond the tips of the wings. The legs should be short; the thighs strong and muscular. Among serious faults are: pinched face, pointed beak, too much back-skull or bulgy neck, and bow-shape carriage.

Dragoons are bred in white, blue-bar, blue check, dun, red, yellow, and mealy, the blues being especially popular. They are considered exceptionally hardy pigeons, very dependable feeders and rearers. Because of these qualities, they are frequently and successfully crossed with other varieties for the production of sizeable squabs. Really fine Dragoons are not easy to procure at any time.

When the present writer asked Mr. C. E. Ranck of New Jersey to tell him out of his long experience with Dragoons why a beginner might well start with this breed, this fancier replied:

"The beginner in the fancy who starts out with Dragoons enters a wide field of opportunity. At present good Dragoons are in so many hands that there is little danger of their being a one-man monopoly. Shows are plentiful, and what show does not give many of the classes to Dragoons? Thus, every fancier has an opportunity to see his birds compete with others' on equal terms.

"Most of the prominent breeders of Dragoons exhibit only a few birds at the more important shows, leaving the smaller shows to the smaller fanciers. The prices for surplus Dragoons are moderate. Top-notch birds command good prices and always will. Dragoon fanciers are usually willing to help the beginner start a stud by selling him at reasonable prices, after the breeding season, those of their well-bred birds which fail in minor points.

"The Dragoon is a prolific breeder of rugged young. No elaborate loft is needful to house this pigeon, the requirements being plenty of light, fresh air, and, most important of all, dry floors. Though Dragoons weigh from eighteen to twenty ounces, apiece, they eat only a moderate amount of feed. A strictly proportioned Dragoon, with stout, close-fitting beak

that is set straight, and an alert eye, gives the appearance of a game cock, which it is to the pigeon fancier."

#### EXHIBITION HOMER

VERY POPULAR in England and on the Continent is the Exhibition Homer, which is also gaining favor among American breeders. In breeding this pigeon, no attention whatsoever is paid to homing ability.

The Exhibition Homer is a very alert-looking, good-sized pigeon with a short, tightly feathered body, broad shoulders, deep keel, the whole appearing wedge-shaped. Its weight is twenty-one ounces.

This pigeon should have a nice, straight face, rising very slightly from the beak to the crown. Its eye should be bright and clear, full and prominent, not sunken. A well-shaped, round, and prominent eye in white or pearl color, encircled by a fine, dark cere, adds much to the beauty of this pigeon. Its wattle should be small, smooth, V-shaped, hollowed out in the center, but not wedge-shaped as in the Dragoon. Its body should be short, broad across the shoulders, flat on top, wedge-shaped from front to tail. Its wings should be powerful, with prominent butts and short, broad flights which overlap closely. The legs should be of medium length, placed well back on the body.

There are three important qualities to be considered in breeding the Exhibition Homer: shape and length of head; shape, strength, and weight of body; and carriage, which should be erect and alert. The shape of the head gives this pigeon its leading characteristic as a variety, for in all other respects it looks like an ordinary flying homer. The Exhibition Homer is the favorite of many fanciers.

In *Pigeons and Pigeon World*, T. T. Martin offers helpful advice to new breeders of Exhibition Homers, when he states, in part: "Select and buy the best possible hens, as good hens are the foundation of successful studs. A good hen should be straight in appearance, with a long, level head—as level as a wedge—, with a full, semi-flat front; a well-filled muzzle; pearl or white eye; black ceres for chequers, blues, and mealies; a stout, well-set beak; fine wattle; and short in feather, particularly in the neck.

"A good Exhibition Homer cock should be straight, long, and lean-headed, not less than 1½" long from centre of eye to tip of beak. Other points should be like those of the hen. A stout, short beak, well set, is essential, since it forms the finishing touch to the make-up of the Exhibition Homer's head.

"The novice should be warned against the barrel-muzzled type, also against gullety, and thick-necked and heavily back-skulled specimens. Don't have them as a gift. Above all, invest in quality pigeons; coarse birds are not looked at in the show pen."

### FANTAIL

AN AMERICAN or European pigeon show without a generous representation of Fantails—the peacocks of pigeondom—would be no show at all. One of the oldest pigeons bred, the Fantail suggests a charming lady tripping along in an exclusive fashion parade.

India is the birthplace of the Fantail. Of all the varieties of pigeons offered for sale in Calcutta, the commonest is the Fantail, especially the white. Indian fanciers place small brass bangles on the young birds in the nest, so that they cannot fall out when they are full grown. These bangles or bracelets have, according to Lyell, small metal balls put within them and their edges are brought closely together, and as the birds walk about, a tinkling sound is produced. An old Indian custom was to cut the Fantail's tail feathers off and to replace them with peacock feathers for a more striking color effect.

Writing in 1677, Willoughby, eminent English authority, describes Fantails as "Broad Tail'd Shakers—because they do almost constantly shake or wag their heads and necks up and down. Broad-tailed, from the great number of feathers they have in their tails; that is to say not fewer than twenty-six. When they walk up and down, they do for the most part hold their tails erect, like a hen or Turkey Cock. These also vary much—in colour." Moore, another well-known English writer (1735), says: "There are two Sorts of these broadtail'd Shakers, the one having a neck much longer and more slender than the other; but the longest neck is the most beautiful and the most esteem'd."

For a long time there were two distinct schools of Fantail

breeders in the British Isles—one in England, the other in Scotland. The Scotch Fantail was characterized by a trembling motion affecting its entire body, so pronounced in the neck and breast as to cause the pigeon to fall backward on its tail. The English Fantail, a somewhat coarser bird, was bred with a view to securing a most beautiful tail in so far as size and position were concerned, with body carriage being largely neglected. This battle of the forms of the Fantail lasted many years. It ended when breeders, by crossing the two different styles, produced a smaller-bodied bird of noble carriage and with a large, saucer-shaped tail.

In America this Fantail has been bred nearly to perfection by such eminent fanciers as Onink, Havemeyer, and Hanson. A good specimen should have a small head with a fine, tapering neck, which twitches tremulously. Large-headed birds with thick necks should never be used for breeding. The body of a good Fantail should be small and round, the wing-butts hidden by the breast feathers. It should be carried upright, with the head resting lightly on the base of the cushion. The rump should be sufficiently large and strong to give the tail an even balance. The cushion should be full, with the feathers at front and back overlapping one another; it should extend well up to the tail feathers. The tail should be of saucer shape—almost flat and as nearly circular as possible, consisting of broad, even, and closely fitting feathers. It should not be allowed to drop, but carried well up—almost perpendicular. Though hard fitting, the tail should not necessarily be thick, since the additional weight may upset the bird's balance. The legs should be moderately short, straight, or slightly buckled forward by the bird's action, and set wide apart. Long legs or legs bent at the knee should be avoided.

Of great importance is the carriage of the Fantail. The bird should walk jauntily, or dance on tip-toe (not flat-footed). It should carry the chest upright, in line with the legs, with the head thrown back gracefully and resting closely in the center of the tail cushion, not cocked to one side as if playing hide and seek. The wings should be set fairly low and closely braced, with the flights barely clearing the lowest tail feathers. The bird's motion should be a convulsive twitching of the neck and a seeming up-heaving of the chest, during which the head bobs up and down on the cushion.



The common practice of lacing the tail feathers of birds entered in shows is generally condemned. As one authority remarked: "What advantage is there under the present system in breeding a close-feathered tail if the other breeders are permitted to handlace birds just before the judging takes place? Such faking should be stopped once and for all by disqualifying every handlaced bird. We have seen an expert take a very loose-feathered bird worth about 25¢ and turn it into a winner. The lacing lasts for an hour, or until the bird preens itself and puts the feathers back into their normal position."

The Fantail is a hardy and prolific breeder. Fulton remarks that a male Fantail, one of his favorite birds, bred well for *fourteen* years. The nervousness which young birds show at times wears off so that after a year or two, they may be used for breeding. The best small Fantails are generally obtained through slight inbreeding. Birds of a well-related, established strain are more likely to produce winners in the show room than those of an unrelated strain.

Since Fantails at best are awkward fliers, it is advisable to give them a roomy loft with a low ceiling, where they are well protected from the effects of wind, rain, and snow (which elements damage their plumage severely) and where they will have ample floor space to strut. Their nests should be at least eighteen inches in diameter so that the birds will not damage their tails.\* They should be given frequent opportunity to bathe. With the right sort of treatment, Fantails become tame quickly and make delightful pets. They occur in the following colors: white, black, blue, red, yellow, silver, dun, checkered, and the charming saddles. The most beautiful strains, as well as the oldest, are the whites.

Relative to the handling and breeding of Fantails, Mr. Gerald F. Champ, long-time fancier of this variety, offers the following concrete suggestions: Above all, the new Fantail enthusiast should study, and thus learn to know thoroughly well, the exact type of Fantail desired today. He should avoid getting birds with wry necks, short backs, badly set legs, or long-sided bodies. Proper leg setting is the real foundation of a quality Fantail. Also important are well tucked-in wings, a

\* For a detailed description of a modern Fantail loft, refer to chapter on "*Lofts*" p. 46.

nicely rounded chest, and a good, strong tail cushion. Soft feathers in fantails are not desirable. Perhaps the most difficult portion of the Fantail pigeon to perfect is the so-called head-pocket, which provides just the right place for the bird's head down deep on the cushion and in the center, with room enough for the tail to be held erect. Another very desirable feature of a top-quality bird is a high-centered tail well filled with wide, evenly laid, hard feathers.

Comments Mr. Champ on breeding: "I believe in line-breeding Fantails, but not too close inbreeding. I have never had any luck with brother-sister, father-daughter, or mother-son matings. My best success has been achieved by mating the youngsters from one cock with two hens, or vice versa. Sometimes by early-season mating one can gain a season, so to speak, by using a certain cock or hen, which has especially desired qualities, with two different mates during the season. Fantails are easy to control: if properly tamed, they may be moved about and handled without trouble or confusion.

"I have used cod-liver oil on the feed at the start of the moulting season, or just before, with good results. I simply take a panful of feed on which I sprinkle, or pour, the oil. Then I stir the feed thoroughly, let it soak into the grains overnight, and use it when the birds are hungry. I believe the use of cod-liver oil has helped my Fantails to a healthier moult. So far as feed is concerned, I always purchase the better known, ready-mixed brands, to which I sometimes add a few pounds of peas or vetches, according to seasonal needs."

This fancier opines that "while clever lacing cannot turn a poor Fantail into a good one, it will help materially in giving the bird's tail a smooth, neat finish." He prefers to see tails laced for the show pen, but wants the practice applied to all birds or none, in fairness to all exhibitors. Mr. Champ favors the policy of lacing Fantails regardless of whether the breeder and exhibitor is at the show or not, which prevails at Eastern and Central Fantail Club Meets.

## FLORENTINE

THE FLORENTINE is a colorful representative of the so-called "hen" or boat-shaped pigeons, whose markings are like those of the Austrian Strasser, and whose general type and carriage

suggest the Modena. This pigeon was in all probability originated in northern Italy, where it was named after a city, by crossing the Leghorn Runt, a large, runtlike "hen" pigeon, with the Modena.

J. W. Ludlow, the British authority, describes the Florentines, which he calls also *Burmese*, as "large birds, with runtish head, crooked or S-shaped neck, very full and prominent breast, short back, very short, seemingly cut-off, perfectly upright, close-fitting and not outspread tail; and in the males, when salacious, the neck and tail come in contact; the flights are short, the tips pointing upward and meeting together immediately behind the tail; the legs are long; and the feet (for so large a bird) rather small, the bearing oftentimes being entirely on the toes. There are self-coloured blacks, reds, yellows, and whites, mottles or pied in various eccentric manners. All the colored specimens should have orange eyes; the self-feathered whites have dark eyes. These hardy birds will breed freely and rear their progeny remarkably well."

To all of which may be added that the old-style Florentine has been considerably improved through the judicious introduction of Maltese blood. Today's bird has a longer neck, longer legs, and a shorter body. However, it should neither be as long-legged as the Maltese, nor carry its tail as upright. It should have a very full and wide breast, a broad, short back, somewhat longer than that of the Maltese, and short, strong wings which rest on the tail without crossing each other. The head, prominent and nicely curved, should have a medium-long beak, which in black and blue birds should be black, and in yellows and reds, of flesh color. The eye should be orange-red, encircled by a small cere of light flesh color. The neck should be rather long, wider than that of the Maltese, and fairly stout, especially towards the breast.

Originally, most Florentines were blue. Today fine specimens are either blue or black, though reds and yellows are also bred. The markings are as follows: head, wing-coverts and tail are colored—black, blue, red, or yellow. The coloring of the head is exactly like that of the Strasser's. Neck, breast, belly, back, and flights should be white. The blue Florentines usually have black, rarely white, wing-bars. Serious faults are: long beak, narrow breast, low tail, small neck, and absence of rich coloring.

The Florentine is a first-class breeder and parent. Being strong in body, this pigeon knows well how to defend itself and is best bred in individual pens. Owing to its many excellent qualities, it is now more often seen in American lofts and shows, being bred extensively in Germany and in Austria.

#### FRILLED PIGEONS

*Satinette, Brunette, Bluette, Silverette, Blondinette, Domino, Vizor, Turbiteen, Oriental Turbit*

AMONG THE most exquisitely colored of short-faced pigeons are the *Oriental Frills*. Originally imported from Turkey, they were first brought to England in 1850 by H. P. Caridia of Birmingham. These dainty birds have been bred in the Orient, in many parts of which they are held sacred to this day, for many centuries. Among lovers of finely marked pigeons in America, the Oriental Frill is firmly established as having almost unsurpassed beauty. Among other fanciers, Mr. Gorse and Mr. Whitney, both of Boston, have been instrumental in importing some of England's outstanding specimens, and the Oriental Frill Club of America is very active in extending the popularity of these lovely little creatures.

In commenting on the general habits of Oriental Frills, whose beaks at that time must have been longer than those of today's birds, H. P. Caridia, the British authority, remarks: "These birds are excellent feeders and breeders, like all the frilled varieties. In their native land they commonly produce from eight to nine pairs of young annually, resting only during the moulting season. They are principally fed on hemp seed, occasionally on *dari* and barley. They are flown daily. Being good fliers, they are, in consequence, good homers, displaying occasionally this property to a remarkable degree. It is only the too kind treatment which they generally receive in this country (England) which makes them delicate."

To the better known varieties of Oriental Frills belong the *Satinette*, *Blondinette*, *Domino*, *Vizor*, *Turbiteen*, and *Oriental Turbit*. Sub-varieties of the *Satinette* include the *Brunette*, *Bluette*, and *Silverette*. Since to render detailed descriptions of all varieties of Oriental Frills is hardly practicable within the available space, only a general account of their coloring and body formation will in most cases be given.

The Oriental Frill is a plump, short-faced bird with a round,

"cobby" body. Its proud, erect carriage may be likened to that of a coquettish lady. The beak of this bird should be short, thick, and slightly curved. The wattle should be large and slightly protruding. The head should be round, forming a continuous outline from the top of the beak to the point of the crest at the back of the head. The highest point of the skull should appear just in front of the eye. The eye itself should be large and somewhat protruding; the eye-cere, small and neat. The crest should be needle-pointed, upright, standing above the level of the highest part of the head. The gullet should be full and extend down to the frill on the breast. The frill should be long, rich in feather, and cover the breast. The flights and the tail should be rather short. The legs should be of medium length, grouse-muffed, the feathers completely covering shanks and feet.

In so far as the color and markings of the Oriental Frill are concerned, the principal aim of fanciers is to produce a bird with a white ground color and distinct markings. It is the sharpness of the marking which counts, rather than its particular form. Since American breeders have brought the markings almost to perfection, they are now devoting their efforts to improve the shape of the head.

The *Satinette* appears usually in black, blue, dun-laced, sulphur or sulphurette, brown, or brunette. It has a white body with tri-colored shoulders, wing-coverts, and tail. Coarse or uneven lacing is considered a serious fault. The sub-varieties of the *Satinette*, the *Brunette*, *Bluette*, *Silverette*, and others, differ only in color and markings: The *Brunette's* tail should be silver, the ground color of its shoulders a silvery dun tint. The *Bluette's* shoulders should be of an even blue color, with white wing bars, laced with black, and an inner lacing of a dark flesh or red tint. Its tail should be like that of the *Satinette*. The *Silverette's* ground color on the shoulders should be silver; it should have white wing-bars laced with a dark dun and an inner lacing of buff or yellow.

The *Blondinette* is marked and laced like the *Satinette*, except that its body color is blue. It occurs in black, dun, blue, silver, sulphur, red, brown and yellow laced, blue-barred, red, and silver-barred. A rare variety of the Oriental Frill is the *Domino*, which is bred in black, blue or silver. This pigeon, whose head is marked like that of a Nun, is crested, smooth-

legged, and full-colored on the shoulders and tail. Equally rare is the *Vizor*, a cross between the Domino and the Satinette. Its head and shoulders are colored, usually blue or silver. This variety may be smooth-headed or crested.

The *Turbiteen* was originated by crossing the Domino, the White Owl, and the Oriental Turbit. Its body is white; its shoulders are marked like those of the English Turbit—with a distinct frontal spot and cheek markings. Its head may be plain or crested. The Turbiteen, which is grouse-legged, appears in black, blue, yellow, red, silver, and various checks.

The *Oriental Turbit* has wing coverts colored like those of the English Turbit, and a colored tail. Its head is plain. Since its distinction lies in the head and beak formation, it has been used to improve the English Turbit in these respects.

Alfred Beeck, the German authority (1908), mentions three kinds of Oriental Turbits: the Smyrnan, the Anatolier, and the Aidiner, pointing to the Anatolier as the raciest and most beautiful.

In commenting on the management of Turbits, an anonymous writer in the *American Pigeon Keeper* emphasizes the fact that "Turbits are a charming variety for several reasons. Since they are small, they require but very little room. Furthermore, they become very tame in a short time. Apparently the stumbling block to some breeders is that Turbits require feeders. I have used flying tipplers, magpies, and baldhead tumblers as feeders with good success. I strongly advise the keeping of proven feeders from year to year, because they know you and you can make your daily inspection of eggs and youngsters easily. I handle my youngsters daily to see that all is well with them. The feeders do not seem to mind, especially if I talk to them. I prefer them to be at least a year old. Feeders should be paired a day later than the Turbits, and the eggs changed as soon as laid. I do not take more than three or four settings of eggs during a season. I break Turbits up at fourteen days' incubation, changing the hens about continually. At least once during the season I let them care for a feeders' youngster for a few days. Turbits are ideal birds for limited accommodations, since they stand very close confinement. As show birds they often last for years. I have shown them and won time and again with birds which were six and seven years old."

## OWLS

VERY SHORT beaks, which form, with skull and wattle, a complete circle characterize these "cobby" pigeons, and have really given them the name "owls." There are African, English, and Chinese or Whiskered Owls.

The *African Owl* is a very attractive bird which has been bred for centuries in the North of Africa, mainly Tunis, and is sometimes called *Tunisian Owl*. James C. Lyell maintains that it was not until approximately 1858 that the first pair of typical African Owls was imported and shown at the Crystal Palace in the same year as a "Booz Pigeon from Tunis." This particular pair of white African Owls attracted such favorable attention and was so far superior to any owls bred in England that in the years following its exhibition, thousands of African Owls were imported. No one seems to know how they originated in Tunis. They were very delicate birds which had to be carefully acclimated.

At that particular time the African Owl was the smallest domestic pigeon known. In fact, the smaller the specimen was, the more value was attached to it. A good pair weighed approximately a pound.

Today's African Owl is a hardy pigeon, differing from the English Owl only in that it is smaller. It is an alert bird of jaunty carriage. In body it should be plump, not long, with a wide and full chest. It should carry a pair of strong wings above the tail. Its beak should be sturdy, short, and parrotlike, that is slightly hooked, with the upper mandible slightly curved to meet the lower at the tip. The wattle should be neat, small, and delicate in texture. In blues, blue-checks, and blacks, the beak should be dark; in silvers, duns, reds and yellows, it should be of flesh color. The head is the most valuable property of the Owl. It should be held reasonably high and be very round and massive. Whether seen from the front, rear, or in profile, the head should always suggest roundness—a very important quality. The eye should be large and bold, centrally placed, and with a close-fitting cere of flesh color. A well-developed gullet should extend from the beak to the frill or rosette, which adorns the breast. This pigeon should have a "bull" neck, that is one which is short and thick. Its legs and

feet should be small, bright red, and free from feathers. The African Owl is bred in black, blue, silver, red, yellow, white, and dun, white specimens being quite rare.

Mr. William Westhus, a Missouri breeder of African Owls, uses flying tipplers as nurses for the beakless young owls. According to a story appearing in the "St. Louis Globe Democrat," "The Tipplers get the bad end of the bargain. Their eggs are filched from their nests, and replaced with eggs of the African Owls. The tipplers make good nurses and raise husky young owls, while no one cares whether the owl hens do as good a job by the tipplers they have hatched. According to this breeder, 'The trick in raising champion pigeons is cold-bloodedness. No matter how good a bird may be, if it is not good enough, you must discard it. Either it is champion material or it is fit only for the stew pot.' All of Mr. Westhus' owls are penned up, while the tipplers have complete freedom."

The *English Owl* has the same properties as the African Owl, except for larger size. In size between these two varieties is the *Chinese* or *Whiskered Owl*, which is similar to the others except for the whiskers—showing the frill in its fullest development, as it runs up on each side of the face or cheeks. This frill, which appears on the breast and neck, is the outstanding characteristic of this variety. Moreover, the Chinese Owl differs from the African Owl in that it has a longer, narrower head, a longer body, and more profuse feathering. It has a frill covering the front of the thigh—pants so called. Owing to its medium-long beak, this pigeon has been noted for its ability to feed its own young. Chinese Owls are bred in blue, silver, black, red, and yellow. The blues have been the finest specimens at most shows.

James C. Lyell quotes the description of the Whiskered Owls given by Neumeister and Pruetz, well-known German authorities: "The Chinese Owl is somewhat larger, but not so finely built, as the Egyptian or Tunisian (African) Owl. The beautifully arched head is smooth and not so angular, but rounder; the strong bill, somewhat crooked in front, is a little longer, in the form of a parrot's beak, with which bird this pigeon has much resemblance, as in bearing, neck, and eyes. The eye is large, the iris orange-coloured, and very lively. The breast is full, the neck short and powerful, the pinions reach



to twelve millimeters from the end of the tail. Feet and toes are short and smooth. The *jabôt* (frill) on the breast and neck is the most peculiar thing about this pigeon. When it stretches its neck, the crop is invisible, as it is hidden behind the so called *cravatte*. This *cravatte* is formed by several rows of feathers, which stand upwards on the under-side of the neck, lying closely to each other from one side to the other. Proceeding from this, the *jabôt* goes downwards to the middle of the breast, forming a rosette. The feathers from this point radiate to all sides, reaching almost over the breast and offering a beautiful sight. This pigeon is found in blue with black bars, black, yellow, silver grey, and sometimes white." The Chinese Owl has been noted for its ability to feed its own young.

In addition to the aforementioned varieties of frilled pigeons, there are the *German Frills* (*Moevchen*) and the *Italian Frills*. The German Frill is a medium-sized, broad-breasted bird whose head and beak are its most significant properties. The head, large and well-rounded, should be as wide as possible, especially between the eyes. The frontal, another property of importance, should likewise be as wide, and also as high, as possible. English Turbits have frequently been used to improve the head properties of the German Frills. The latter are bred in single (self) colors and various shields. Furthermore, there are German Frills with colored bodies and white tails and vice versa, either smooth-headed or crested.

The *Italian Frills* are most commonly found in Upper Italy, especially in the region of Reggio Emilia. They are easily distinguished from English, German, and Oriental Frills by their comparatively long legs, and also by their general tail and body carriage, in which they resemble the Modena. Moreover, their heads—always smooth—are not as high, round, and broad as those of other owl varieties. Italian Frills are bred in white, black, dun, silver, and many other colors.

## HUNGARIAN

PERHAPS THE most showy of the so-called hen-pigeon varieties is the Hungarian, a great squab producer. As the name indicates, this pigeon was originated in Hungary. It is a sub-variety of the Florentine, which resembles much the Maltese,

except that it is longer and heavier. One of the Hungarian's main characteristics is a long, slightly curved, down-faced head. This pigeon is very popular in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Its squabs—they usually weigh well over a pound apiece at four weeks of age—are prized because of their being almost all breast. Their meat is a golden yellow, which is the color most desired by markets and other dealers. When mature, the Hungarian weighs between 24 and 28 ounces.

Breeders of this exceedingly attractive pigeon are numerous in America because the bird is in popular demand. Two specialty clubs, the United Hungarian Club and the Hungarian Pigeon Club, are actively promoting the cause of this interesting dual-purpose breed.

Hungarians are bred in black, blue, dun, red, silver, checks, and other colors. The color requirement for a pigeon of such distinct contrasts as the Hungarian cannot be met except by persistent and intelligent effort. It provides that there be a white region one-fourth inch wide, running from the bird's nose over the middle of the head and spreading out into a large V to the wing butts, then continuing as a broad white strip, one-half inch wide, between the wing butts and the bib, which reaches almost to the lower border of the breast. Ten flight feathers must be white, the remainder colored.

Most breeders of the Hungarian do not hide the fact that they have to trim their birds for exhibitions by eliminating foul feathers. Of course, such trimming should not cause bare spots or exposed edges. In other words, the trimming must not be noticeable, for otherwise the judge will penalize the bird heavily. Since the Hungarian is both a color as well as a form pigeon, it is not an easy matter to breed it true both to type and to color. Distinctly marked youngsters can be expected only from parents whose ancestry and breeding tendencies are well known.

The present writer asked Mr. J. H. Webster of North Carolina to comment on his favorite breed of pigeons and received a reply, part of which reads as follows:

"For beauty in pigeons the novice should choose the Hungarians. They are fast becoming exceedingly popular. In the breeding pen they will equal any other variety in the production of squabs; their meat is desirable, for they throw the

'golden-skinned' squabs. In the show-room, Hungarians surpass many other varieties because of their markings and their type. The white tape-marking, which runs from the wattle over the top of the head and down the back of the neck and the side of the breast, forming a pear-shaped bib, is really a great sight, as are also the Hungarian's colored wings with eight to ten white flights and a solidly white body with colored tail.

"Yes, Hungarians are hard to breed, but what pleasure would one get out of producing a top-notch bird if one did not have to follow a strict standard and cull closely in order to breed an ideal bird! I recommend the Hungarian to anyone who likes a real pigeon or who does not like the variety he keeps at present."

#### ICE-PIGEON AND OTHER GERMAN TOYS

*Crescent, Swiss, Fireback, Helmet, Priest, Shield, Spot, Starling, Monk, Stork, Suabian, Swallow, Frillback*

A SQUATTY and rather shy little bird of exquisite coloring, which does not mate as quickly as other pigeons—that, in short, is the Ice-pigeon. It owes its name to the beautiful lavender blue which resembles the lavender of blue ice—at least in the opinion of the pigeon's originators—the Germans. I saw a huge block of ice in the window of a metropolitan pet-store some months ago, in which were also three pairs of Ice-pigeons. The display attracted many curious people who were eager to know why six dainty little pigeons needed a large block of ice.

The Ice-pigeon belongs to the group of pigeons called *German Toys*, a toy being a pigeon bred mainly for color and markings and not for type or form. In his "Illustrated Book of Pigeons," Robert Fulton (1879) mentions seventeen varieties of toys, most of which have subvarieties based on differences in markings and on their having plain or crested heads, clean or feathered legs:

Hyacinth	Ice	Swallow
Victoria	Priest	Spot
Suabian	Brunswick	Fairy
Porcelain	Letz	Helmet
Starling	Shield	Frillback.
Fire	Crescent	

His comment on these toys is illuminating: "All the seventeen varieties are about of equal size and formation, except only the Hyacinths, Victorias, Helmets, and Spots, which differ somewhat. In the case of the others, the forehead is high, the beak long and of the dove-shape or spindle character—long, thin, horny, and hard. The nostrils are small and devoid of warring. The eye, too, whether dark or colored, is comparatively free of any fleshy cere, the single ring of the eyelash only being observable. The head in all cases, although not rounded, still is of a nice curve, no matter whether crested or plain; the neck invariably is short and acutely tapering; the shoulders and back broad; the entire form of medium length; the body plump; the legs short; the posture invariably is of a stooping or horizontal bearing, and this point is a marked feature in the majority, with one or two exceptions." Of the varieties mentioned, the Ice-pigeon, the Priest, the Swallow, the Frillback, and occasionally a few Starlings, Shields, and Spots are perhaps most frequently seen at pigeon shows in America.

Of the four varieties of Ice-pigeon cited by German authorities, the plainest—it is a clear light-blue with dark flights and tail bars, but without wing bars—is undoubtedly the variety from which the others were developed. The second variety, also pale lavender, is distinguished by white wing bars finely edged with black. Its eyes are bright orange; its legs and feet heavily feathered. The third variety of this charming little pigeon has blue-black flights, tail and muffs, white bars with fine black edging—in all other parts it has the pale lavender typical of all Ice-pigeons. To the fourth variety belong the laced or spangled birds, ranging from those tinted a most delicate gray to those tinted a rich light blue. Finally, we come to the most beautiful of all Ice-pigeons—the *Porcelain*. It is like the spangled variety, except that the checking extends clearly and sharply to the flight feathers. Because of the difficulty of producing an even, delicate and yet distinct pencilling of this sort, the Porcelain is seldom seen at exhibitions.

Since the Ice-pigeon is a direct descendant of the common German field pigeon (*Feldtaube*), which it resembles markedly in size and shape, it has inherited the latter's shyness. Continued confinement, however, combined with frequent handling, has tamed this handsome bird considerably so that

it is no more difficult to keep than some of the other and older varieties. Ice-pigeons are fairly good breeders. Perhaps their greatest fault is breeding so rapidly that not infrequently a second nest of squabs is hatched before the first ones are old enough to feed themselves.

In response to my recent request for some pertinent information concerning his favorite breed of pigeons, the late Mr. Earl A. Whepley, noted California fancier, wrote me:

The Ice-pigeon is one of the most delicately colored toy pigeons. Its ground color is a very delicate pale blue, almost entirely lacking even in a blue color of the feather. The "bloom" of the feather is a powdery substance which rubs off like powder against a dark cloth. Ice-pigeons in perfect health show this bloom to the greatest advantage.

In breeding Ice-pigeons one should strive for distinct markings, soft color of feather, short, cobby bodies set on medium-long legs which have well spread muffs. Dove-like heads give Ice-pigeons a gentle appearance.

Ice-pigeons like to be left alone when they are breeding, but they can be tamed with friendly treatment. They are excellent parents and rear their young easily. The warm spring months are the best time for breeding this variety. In really cold weather Ice-pigeons sometimes refuse to pair up.

There are a number of breeders of Ice-pigeons in the United States, most of them probably in the State of California. Their foundation stock can be traced directly to importations of high-class birds from Europe.

Beginning fanciers will find in this charming breed the fulfilment of their wishes for a truly beautiful and most interesting toy pigeon. Good stock can usually be secured at reasonable prices, and experienced Ice fanciers seem most willing to help with friendly advice.

#### CRESCENT (HALBMONDTAUBE, MONDTAUBE)

THIS PIGEON, sometimes wrongly called the Swiss, resembles the Fireback in shape and size. Its distinctiveness lies in its color, which is a rich, creamy white, yellow, or silver, except for deep-brown wing-bars and a crescent of the same color extending upwards on the neck. Crescents should have orange eyes and dark beaks. Both clean-legged and muff-legged speci-

mens are bred. Moreover, they may be plain-headed or crested.

The *Swiss* (*Schweizertaube*) is marked like the Crescent, except that the crescent extends clear around the neck. This pigeon is always clean-legged, somewhat slenderer than the Crescent, and has a pointed crest.

#### FIREBACK ( KUPFERFLÜGELBLÄSSCHEN - WEISSSCHWANZ )

ACCORDING TO Schachtzabel, this variety, which is also called fire-pigeon, is not a distinct breed, but merely the German copper-winged White-tail. Ludlow, the British authority, describes the Fireback as being "of a beautiful, rich, chestnut-brown colour upon sides, shoulders, and back; the flights are black with the ends bronzy within; the head, neck, breast, underfeathering, and muffs are black or very nearly so. On the forehead, just above the nostrils, is an oval white spot extending to the high front of the head; the tail, too, is pure white. The eye is bright-orange, and the beak is black. Male and female Firebacks are not always marked exactly alike, the cocks having almost plain chestnut sides, shoulders, and back, whereas the hen's feathers on these parts are distinctly tipped with black at their outer extremities." Fireback pigeons breed fairly true, but often without the frontal spot. Their leg-muffs should be long.

#### HELMET ( HELMTAUBE or CALOTTE )

HELMETS ARE white pigeons having a colored crown or helmet which extends from the wattle through the eye and around the ear, terminating in a curve at the back of the neck. The head is plain or crested, the crested variety being bred almost entirely in the United States. The eye should be pearl-white, the tail either black or colored.

Any fancier will find the Helmet an attractive and alert little pigeon, which is a pretty sight in loft or aviary. Since it is small and does not eat much, it costs but little to keep breeders of this variety. Having a beak of average length, the Helmet can feed its youngsters without difficulty.

**PRIEST (PFAFFENTAUBE)**

THE ENTIRE body of this pigeon, which is approximately the size of the Ice-pigeon, is self-colored, that is, black, red, yellow, or blue, except for the head-crown, which is white. Priests are single or double-crested; the latter usually have narrow white wing-bars. The double-crested variety also has a frontal tuft of feathers, called "rose," growing reversely. This ornament should be white. The upper mandible must also be white in all varieties, the lower harmonizing with the color of the bird's plumage. The eye should be dark. Priests are either grouse-muffed or slippered, i.e., partly muffed, with the former the more popular. The single-crested specimens, called "Blassen," occur mostly in red and yellow without bars, and have a very lustrous plumage.

**SHIELD (DECKEL, SCHILDTAUBE)**

HERE WE have a plain-headed, white pigeon with colored shoulders like those of the Turbit, and with white wing-bars. Its beak is white; its eyes, dark-hazel. Preferred colors in England are black, blue, silver, red, and yellow. The German fanciers are especially fond of yellow Shields with white wing-bars. They breed not only the plain-headed Shield, but also those having broad, single or double crests. Double-crested Shields are feather-legged; single-crested are either clean or feather-legged. The plain heads usually have feather-legs, with toes not to show.

**SPOT (FARBENSCHNIPPE, FARBENSCHWANZ)**

WHITE PIGEONS with colored tails and a well-formed, oval spot of color on the forehead over the beak are called Spots. Color is the main consideration in breeding this variety. The color must be even and rich—a velvety black, a clear blue, a pronounced yellow or red. The markings must be accurate. Some Spot pigeons are crested. Many English fanciers mate crested and plain-headed Spots together with good results.

The Spot pigeon should have dark-colored eyes with nar-

row, flesh-colored ceres. Its beak should be long and slim; in blues and blacks the upper mandible should be dark and the lower, white, whereas in yellow and blue specimens the entire beak should be flesh-colored. There should be no white feathers in the tail of the Spot. Its hocks and legs should be well feathered, the leg feathers covering the feet thoroughly.

The Spot is not only a very attractively colored bird, but a dependable breeder and careful feeder.

#### STARLING (STARENHALSTAUBE)

A PIGEON very popular in Germany and bred in more color combinations than any other German toy pigeon is the Starling, an indefatigable breeder and rearer. Except for white wing-bars and a well-defined white crescent on the breast, which is sometimes streaked with gray or black, this pigeon is black.

Starlings should have narrow, distinct, and clear-white wing-bars. Most specimens are plain-headed. One rarely sees the crested variety today. The eyes of the Starling should be red. These handsome toys are also bred in blue, reds being rare. One of the black subvarieties has on its wings a generous sprinkling of white dots—the color characteristic of the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Youngsters of this variety get neither the rich black or blue ground color nor the sharply defined markings until after their first or second moult. As Starlings get older, their crescents grow large and rather unattractive. Attempts are now being made to breed muff-legged Starlings.

The *Starling Monk* has head, flights, tail, and wing-bars white on a black ground color. Like the Starling it has a well-defined white crescent and a pointed crest.

#### STORK (STORCHTAUBE, SCHWINGEN-TAUBE)

THE STORK pigeon is a white bird, having a colored "spot" on the head, colored flights, a colored design at the wing-butts, called "Blume," and colored muffs. From eight to ten of its primary flights should be black, blue, red, or yellow. Sharply divided markings and an all-white ground color are the princi-



pal points aimed at in breeding the Stork pigeon, which is found with and without the shell crest.

### SUABIAN (MARMORSTAR)

IN SIZE, shape, and color the Suabian resembles the Starling, from which it has undoubtedly been bred. Points of difference are the Suabian's black spangling or lacing at the tips of its wing-coverts and a black-spangled crescent extending farther up the neck than that of the Starling, and closing up on the back of the neck.

The two most popular colors of Suabians are the black-spangled, having a black and white checkered plumage, and the pretty bronze, boasting an intermixture of black, brown, and creamy white. The bird's ground color is a slaty blue, the feathers on head and neck being tipped with a silvery white. The outer flights should be black and have creamy-white spots near the ends. The tail should be black. Both, the black-spangled as well as the bronze should have black beaks and orange-red eyes. Clean-legged specimens are the most commonly bred.

### SWALLOW

BECAUSE OF its distinctive and unusually attractive markings, the Swallow, a squatty bird the size of the common European field pigeon, is one of the favorite German toys with lovers of the color pigeon. It got its name from the fact that its plumage, especially in the blue variety, resembles that of a small species of gull—the tern or "sea swallow." The Swallow was first brought to England in 1825 and became a favorite there almost immediately.

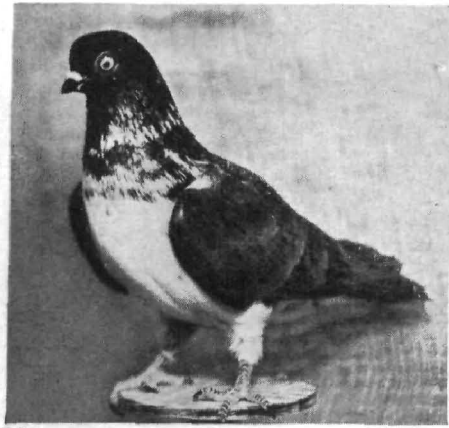
Among the early subvarieties the following colors were prominent: red, yellow, black, blue (barred or barless), blue checkered, silver (barred or barless), and silver checkered. Originally this handsome, low-standing pigeon was grouse-limbed. Today's fashion, however, favors long foot feathers; in fact, the longer the boots, the higher the quality of the bird, provided, of course, it has other commendable properties.

American fanciers seem to favor two varieties in particular



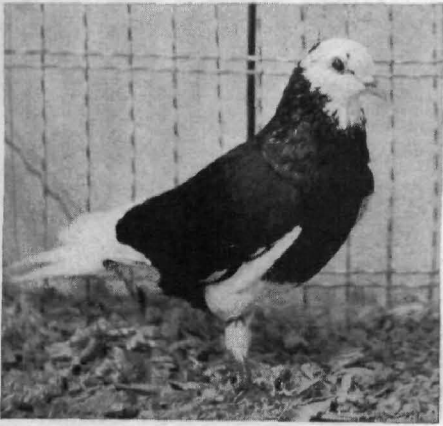
**97 GIANT HOMER**

*Best old A. O. C. Bred by Mr. Stanley Stout of Elnora, Ind.*



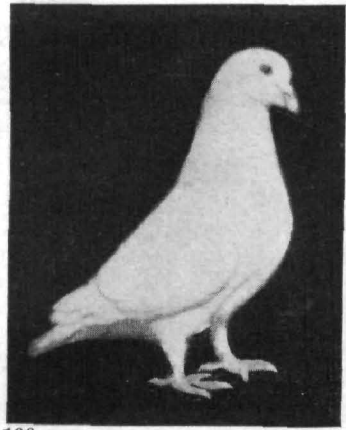
**98 STETTINER TUMBLER**

*Bred by Mr. Paul Kaiser of Kenosha, Wis.*



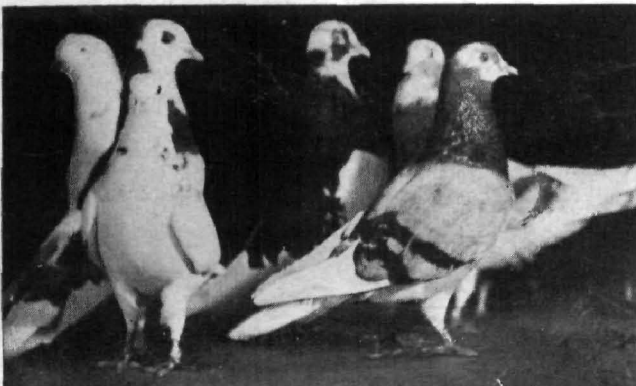
**99 BIRMINGHAM ROLLER**

*First young black at 1941 Canada Pacific Exhibition. Bred by Mr. Tom Mayson of Vancouver, B. C.*



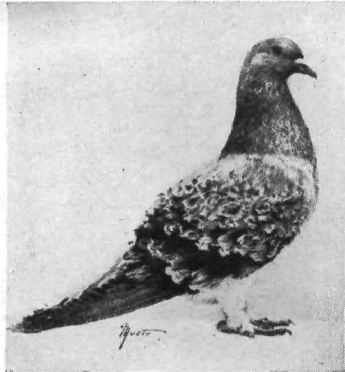
**100 SWISS MONDAINE**

*Fine specimen. Weight 35 oz. Bred by Mr. Robert H. Haag of Louisville, Ky.*

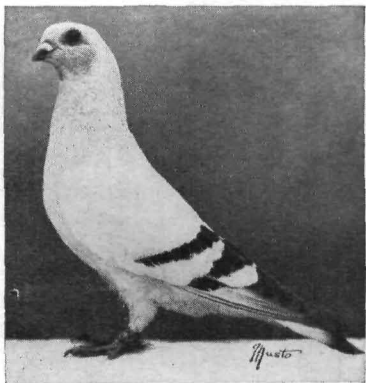


**101 BIRMINGHAM ROLLERS, MOSTLY PENSOME STRAIN**

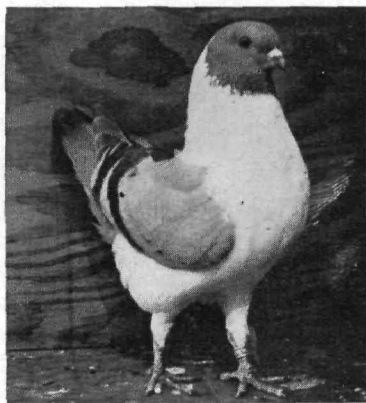
*A group of outstanding performers. Bred by Mr. Tom Mayson of Vancouver, B. C.*



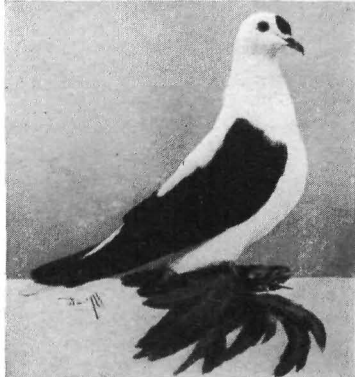
**102 BLUE FRILLBACK**  
Bred by Mr. Ivan Crowl, St. Austell, Cornwall.



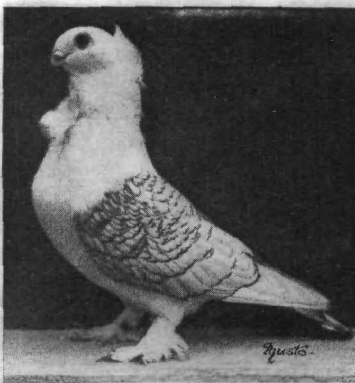
**104 DAMASCENE (A COLOR PIGEON FROM THE ORIENT)**  
Bred by Mr. Ivan Crowl, St. Austell, Cornwall.



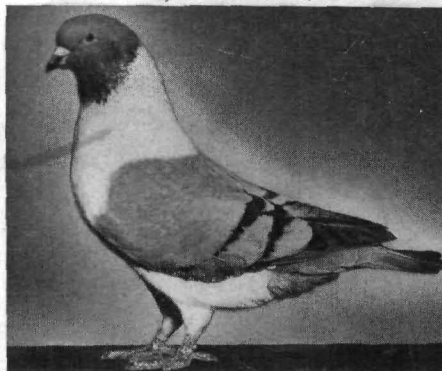
**106 BLUE GAZZI MODENA**  
First-prize winner at 1941 National Pigeon Show. Bred by Mr. H. O. Keesling of Pasadena, Calif.



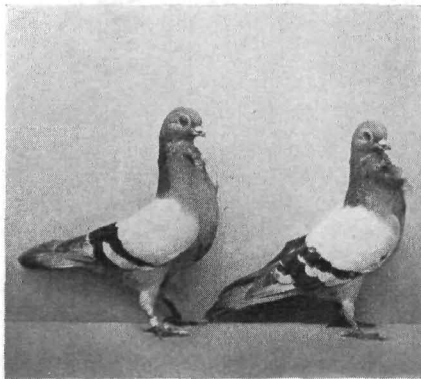
**103 SWALLOW**  
Bred by Mr. Ivan Crowl, St. Austell, Cornwall.



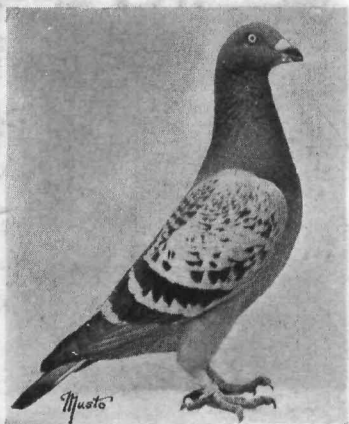
**105 BLUE-LACED SATINETTE**  
First-prize winner for two seasons wherever shown. Bred by Mr. A. Sears of Forest Gate, London.



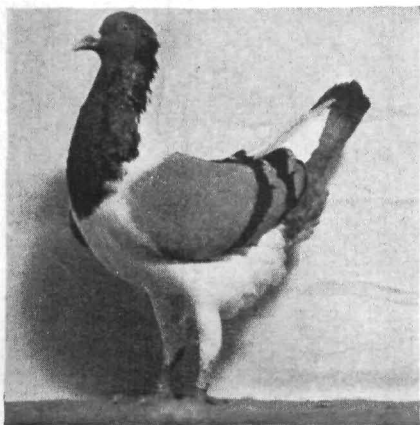
**107 BLUE-BARRED STRASSER**  
Awarded first prizes: at Pomona, Calif., 1940 by Judge R. C. King; at Oakland, Calif., 1940, by Judge Ferguson; at National Pigeon Show, Lansing, Mich., by Judge Kiefer. Owned by Mr. W. H. Cable of Flint, Mich. Bred by Mr. Chas. Neidhardt of San Jose, Calif.



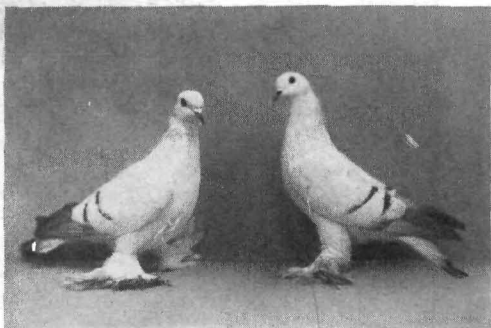
**108 ITALIAN FRILLS (OWL)**  
*Bred by Dr. Giuseppe Faresti, Modena, Italy.*



**109 GENUINE HOMER**  
*Bred by Mr. L. Clement, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, England.*



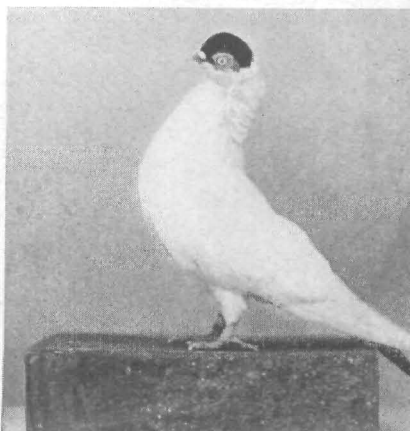
**110 HUNGARIAN**  
*Bred by Mr. Fisher G. Morrison, Hayward, Calif.*



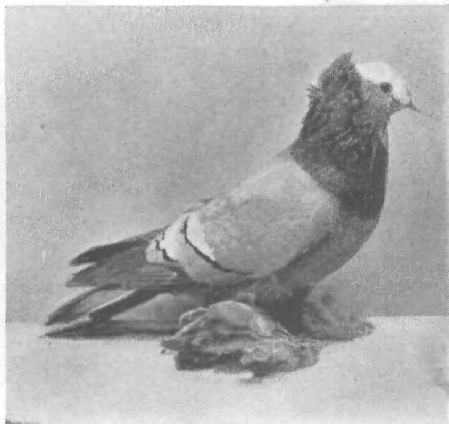
**111 ICE-PIGEONS**  
*Bred by Mr. Born.*



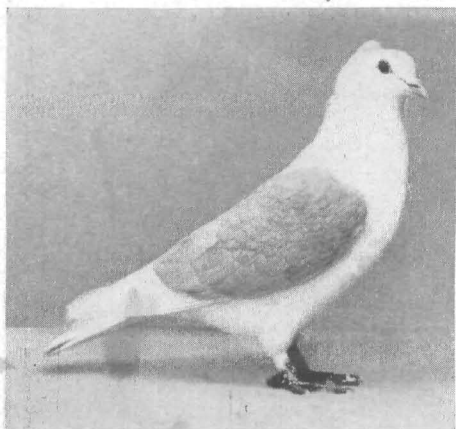
**112 CRESCENT**  
Bred by Mr. Precht.



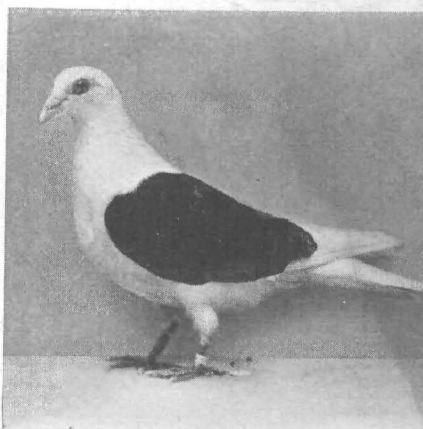
**113 HELMET (CALOTTE)**  
Bred by Mr. Ludewig.



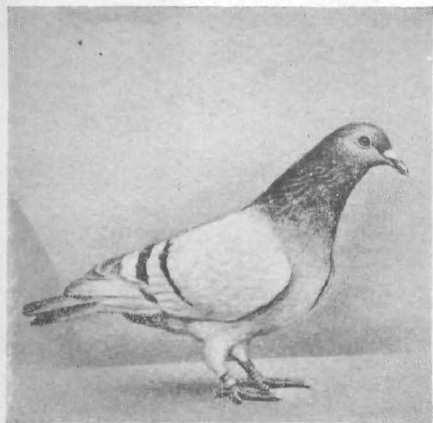
**114 PRIEST**  
Bred by Mr. Hahn.



**115 SHIELD**  
Bred by Mr. Wuhrer.



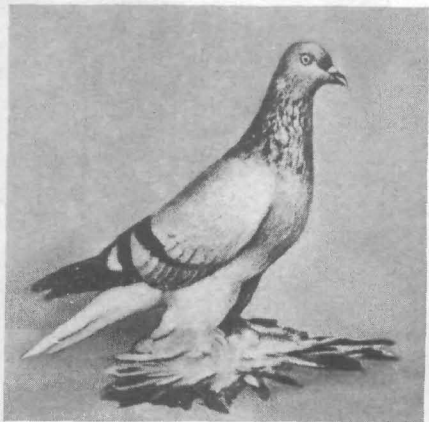
**116 FRANKISH VELVETSHIELD**  
Bred by Mr. Teetz.



**117 COBURG SILVER LARK**

*Bred by Mr. M. Moench, Sonneberg-Hoebach.*

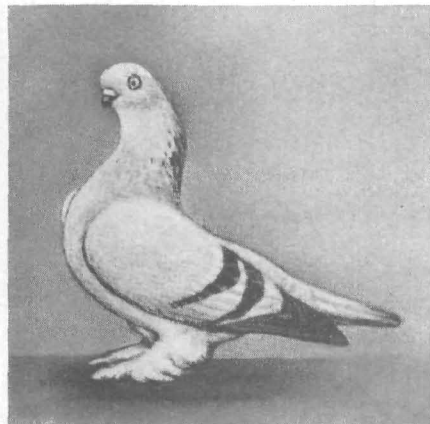
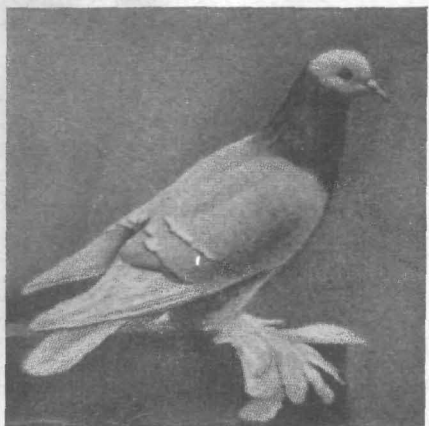
*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*



**119 BERLIN WHITE-TAILED TUMBLER**

*Bred by Mr. G. Kanitz, Berlin.*

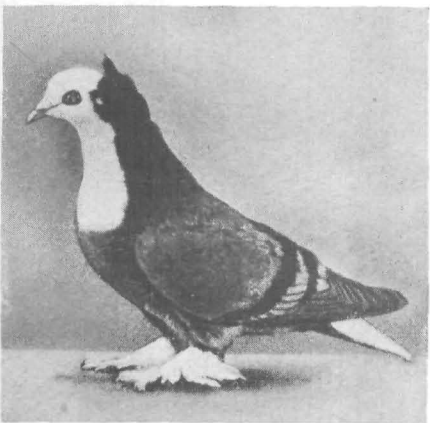
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**118 BERLIN SHORT-FACED TUMBLER**

*Bred by Mr. B. Jentsch, Berlin.*

*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*



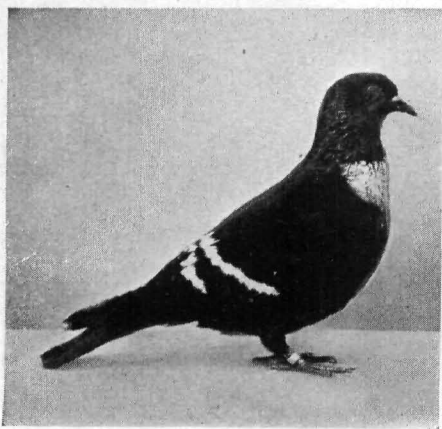
**120 THURINGIA WHITE-BIB**

*Bred by Mr. A. Langenhan, Zella-Mehlis.*

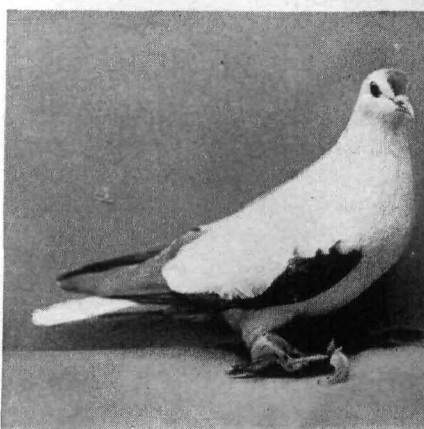
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**121 BLUE MONK WITH WHITE WING-BARS**

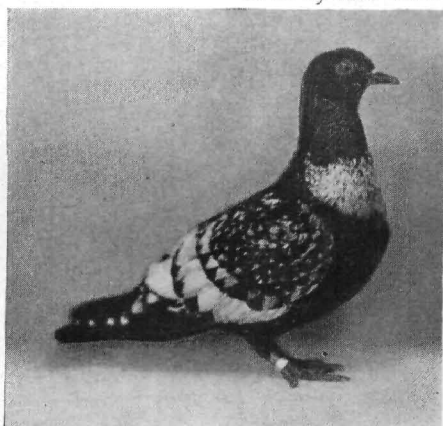
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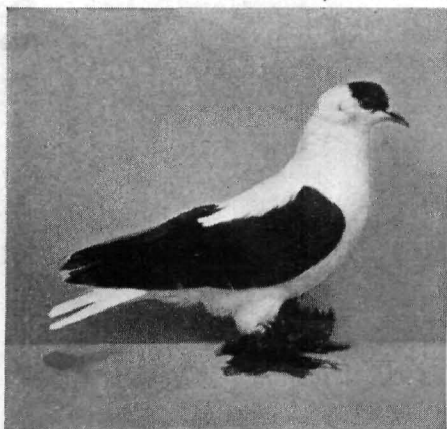
**122 STARLING**  
Bred by Mr. Bopp.



**123 STORK**  
Bred by Mr. Arnold.



**124 SUABIAN (MARMORSTAR)**  
Bred by Mr. Vosseler.

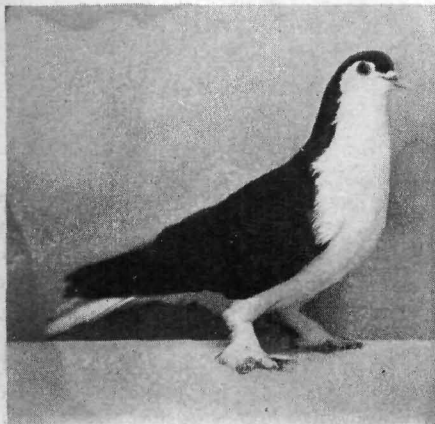


**125 NUREMBERG SWALLOW**  
Bred by Mr. Steinkohl.

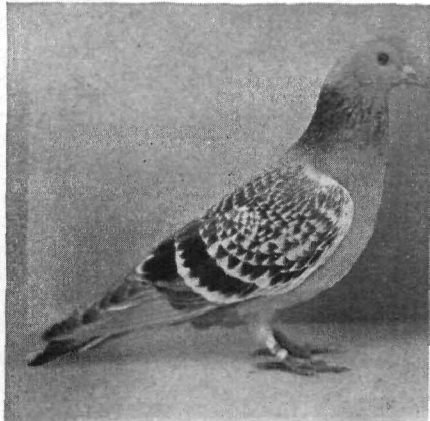


**126 FRILLBACK**  
Bred by Mr. Raseblau.

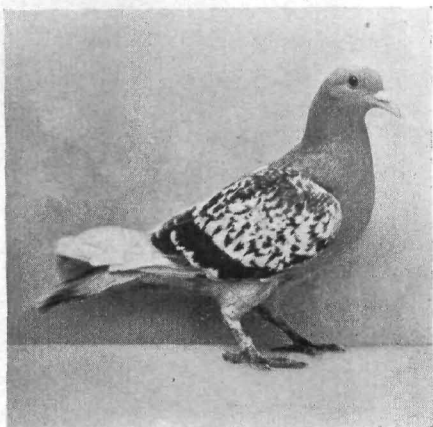




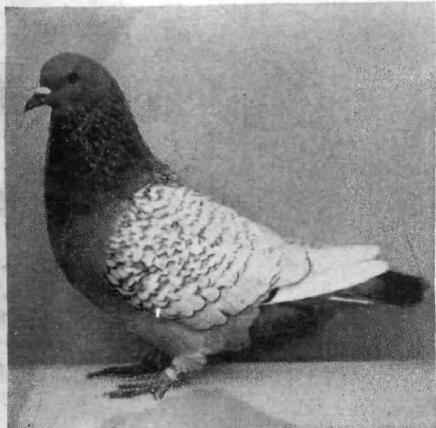
127 LAHORE  
Bred by Mr. Frank.



128 COBURG LARK  
Bred by Mr. Carl.



129 NUREMBERG LARK  
Bred by Mr. Burkhardt.

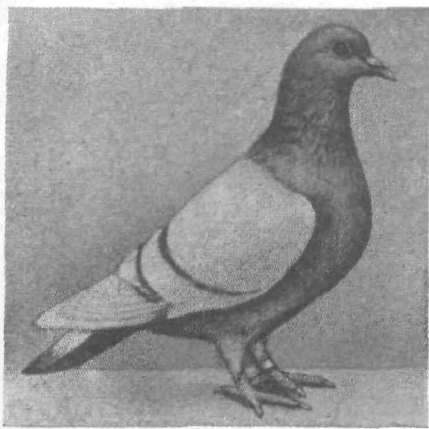


130 LYNX  
Bred by Mr. Kuhnert.

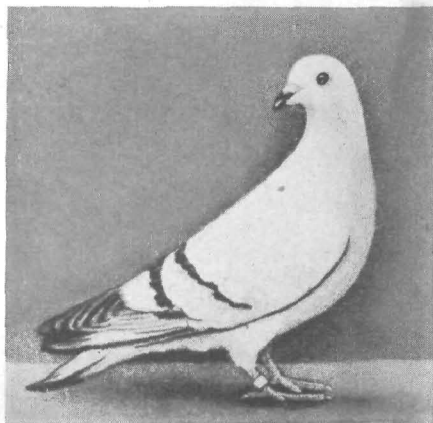


131 MAGPIE  
Bred by Mr. N. E. Brooks, Rutherford, N.J.

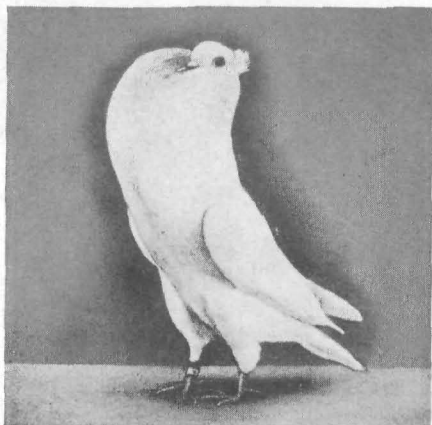




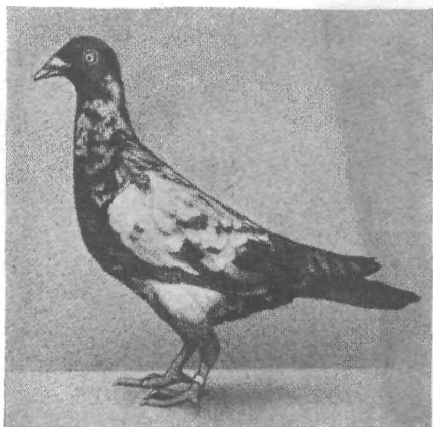
**132 NUREMBERG MEALY LARK**  
*Bred by Mr. Chr. Schumann, Happurg, Munster.*  
*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*



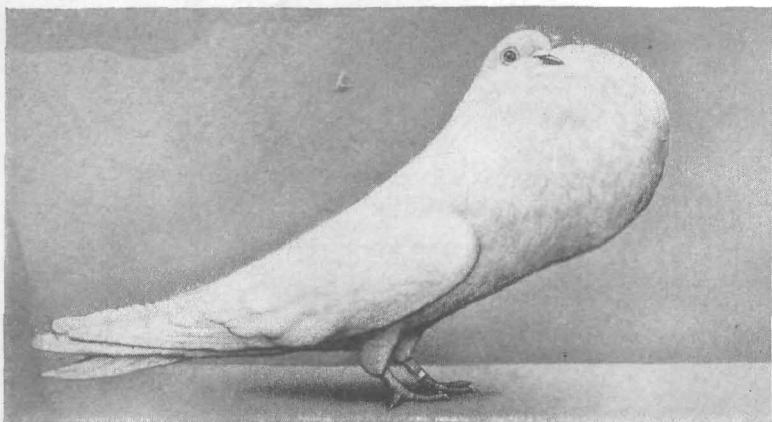
**133 ICE-PIGEON**  
*Bred by Mr. R. Glaeser, Flocha, Saxony.*  
*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*



**134 THURINGIA CROPPER**  
*Bred by Mr. P. Greiner, Bad Bibra.*  
*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*

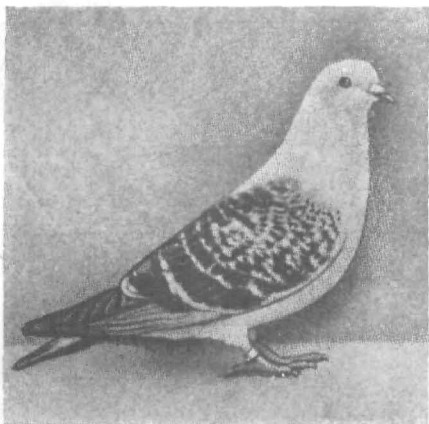


**135 TIGER TUMBLER**  
*Bred by Mr. Herman Herbst, Olvenstedt*  
*(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*



**136 OLD-GERMAN CROPPER**

*Bred by Mr. F. Rueckert, Darmstadt.  
(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*

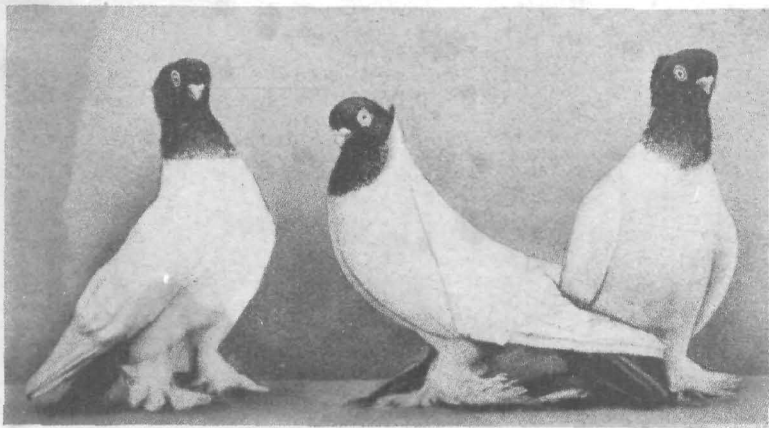


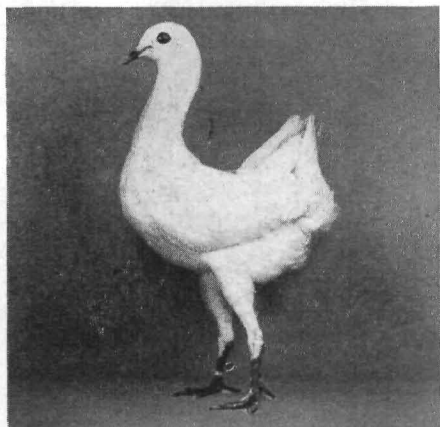
**137 FORELLEN PIGEON**

*Bred by Mr. Rudolf Glaeser, Flocha,  
Saxony.  
(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*

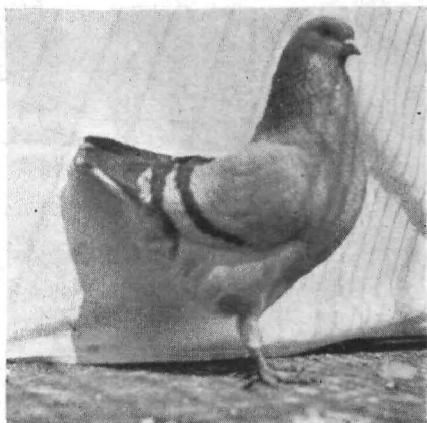
**138 KOENIGSBERG SHORT-FACED TUMBLERS**

*Bred by Mr. B. Kroehnert, Linkuhnen.  
(Reproduced from Geflügel-Börse)*

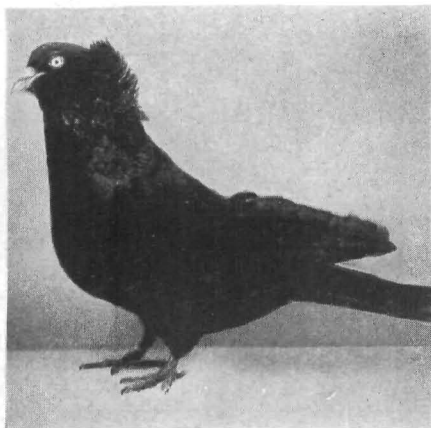




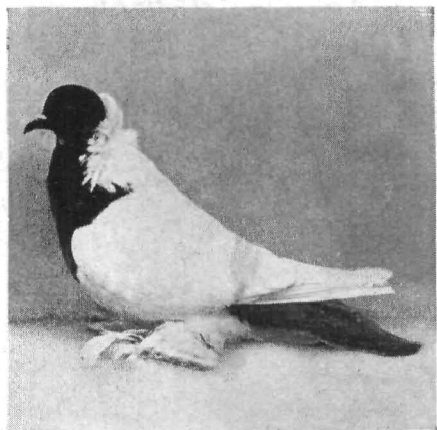
**139 MALTESE**  
Bred by Mr. Leberle.



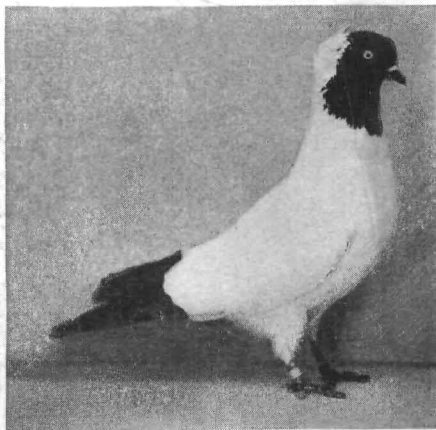
**140 MODENA (SCHIETTI)**  
Bred by Mr. H. O. Keesling, Pasadena, Calif.



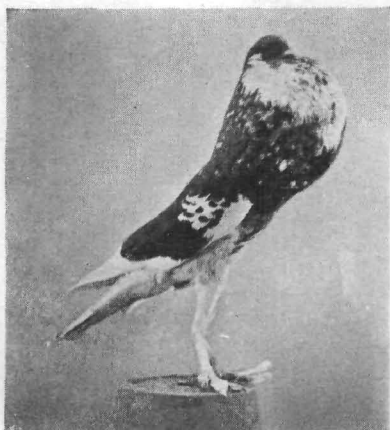
**141 MONTAUBAN** Bred by Mr. Mertens.



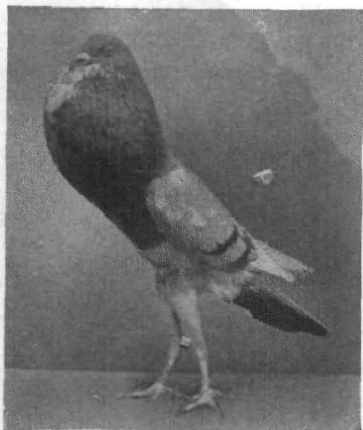
**142 OLD-GERMAN MOORHEAD**  
Bred by Mr. Hentzschel.



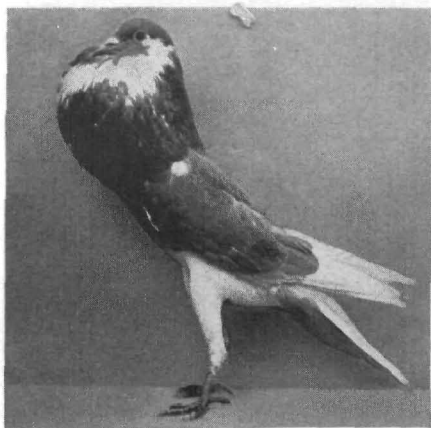
**143 NUN**  
Bred by Mr. Schoof.



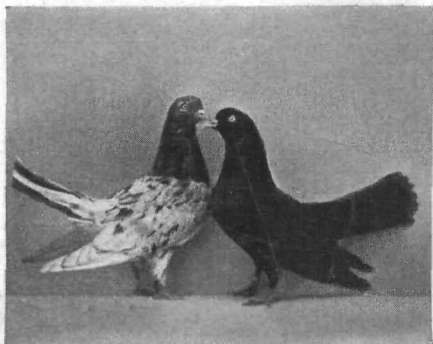
**144 ENGLISH POUTER**  
*Bred by Mr. A. Menze, St. Louis, Mo.*



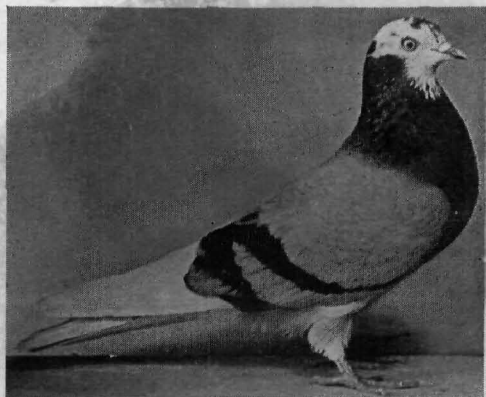
**145 PIGMY POUTER**  
*Bred by Mr. Roy Payne, Long Beach, Calif.*



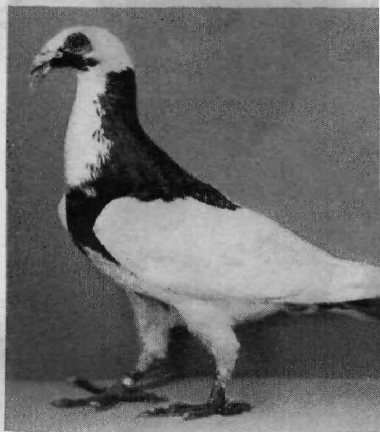
**146 FRENCH POUTER**  
*Bred by Mr. Rauschenirer.*



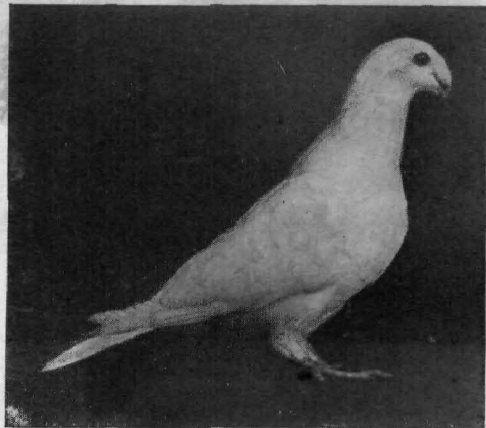
**147 ORIENTAL ROLLERS**  
*Bred by Mr. Freisberg.*



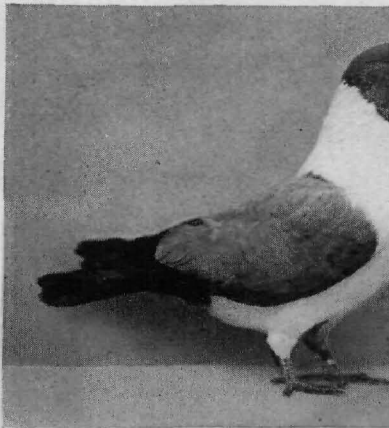
**148 BIRMINGHAM ROLLER**  
*Owned by Mr. W. H. Pensome, Harborne,  
 Birmingham, England.*



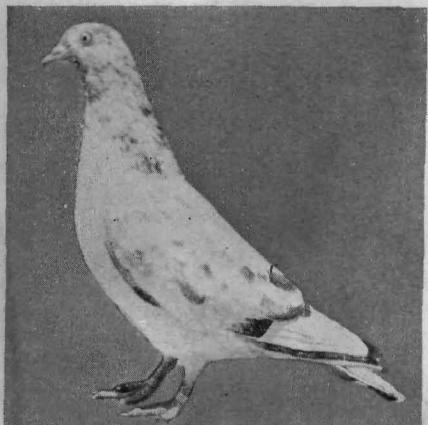
**149 SCANDAROOON**  
*Bred by Mr. Probst.*



**150 SHOW HOMER**  
*Bred by Mr. George Neuerburg, Los Angeles, Calif.*



**151 STRASSER (EUROPEAN TYPE)**  
*Bred by Mr. Oberender.*



**152 FLYING TIPPLER**

Bred by Mr. A. W. DeClute, Ontario, Canada. (This pigeon holds the unbeaten record for consistent wins and total flying hours in any one season.)

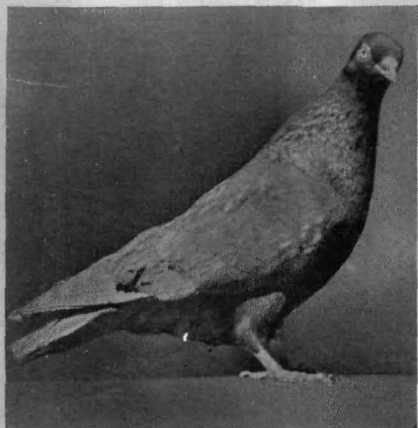
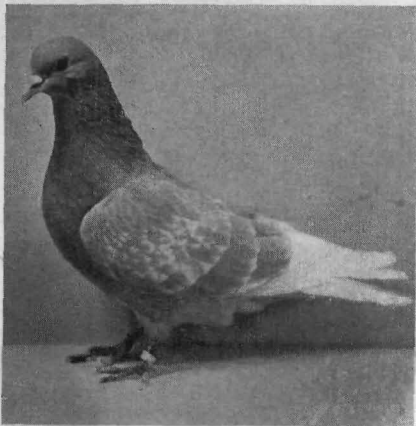


**153 RUSSIAN TRUMPETER**

Bred by Mr. Voigt, Jr.

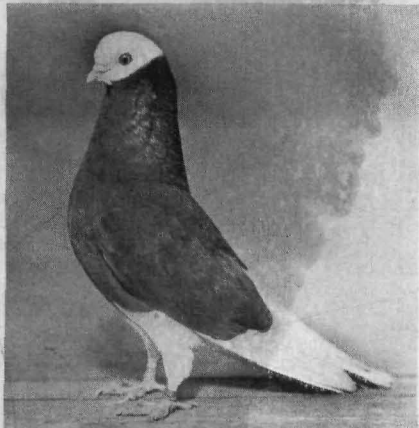
**154 GERMAN (ALTENBURG) TRUMPETER**

Bred by Mr. Otto, Schreienberg.



**155 PARLOR TUMBLER**

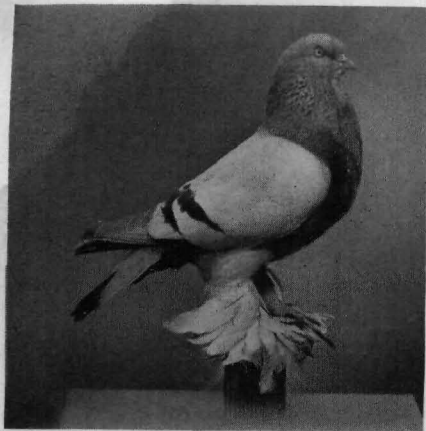
Bred by Mr. Ray E. Gilbert, Salt Lake City, Utah.



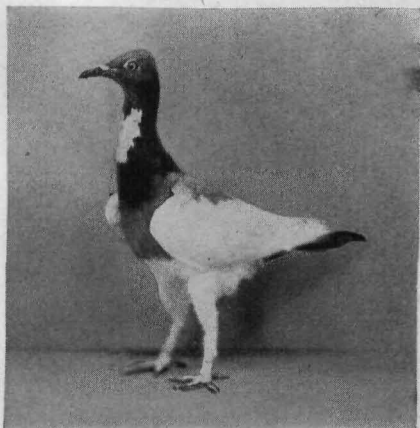
**156 BALD-HEAD TUMBLER**

Owned by Mr. Geo. H. Storey, Gosport, Newcastle-on-Tyne, England.

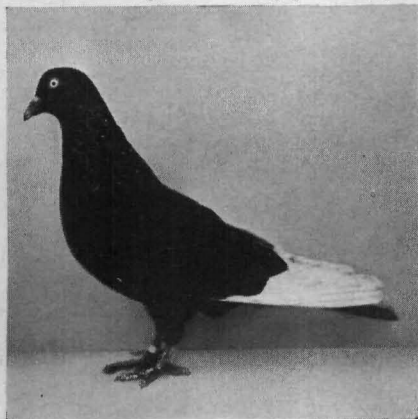




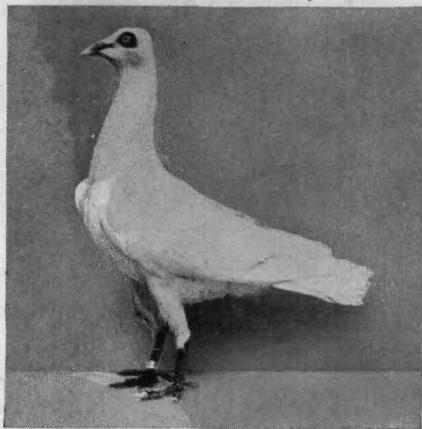
**157 MUFFED TUMBLER**  
*Bred by Mr. K. R. Baxter, Los Angeles, Calif.*



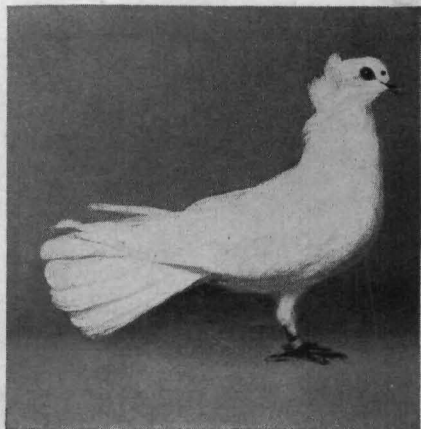
**158 BERLIN LONG-FACED TUMBLER** (*Berliner Lange*) *Bred by Mr. Schimming.*



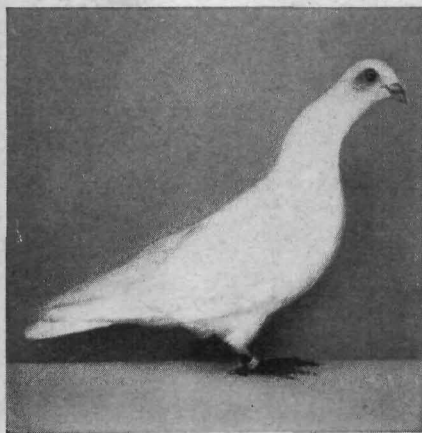
**159 HANOVER LONG-FACED TUMBLER**  
*Bred by Mr. Schlie.*



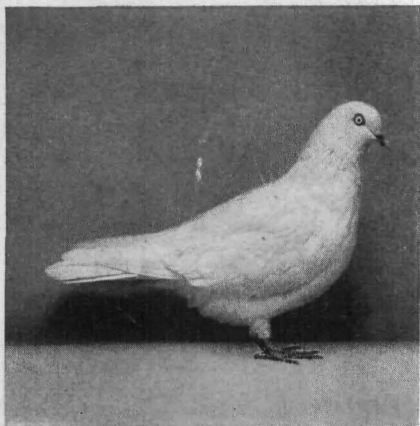
**160 STRALSUNDER HIGHFLYER**  
*Bred by Mr. Kolasius.*



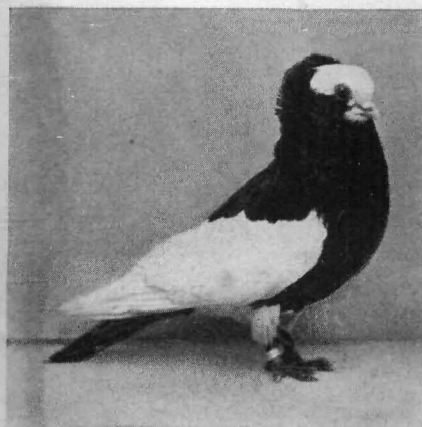
**161 DANZIG HIGHFLYER**  
*Bred by Mr. Löffler.*



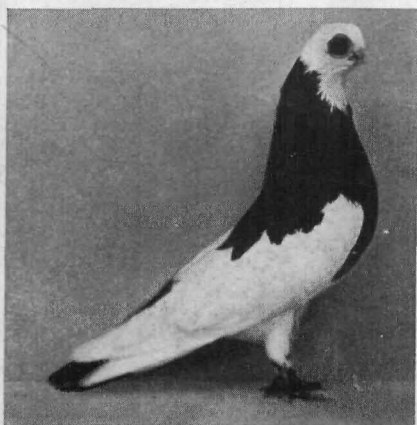
**162 STARGARD SWAN-NECK**  
*Bred by Mr. Westphal.*



**163 COLOGNE TUMBLER**  
*Bred by Mr. Neven du Mant.*

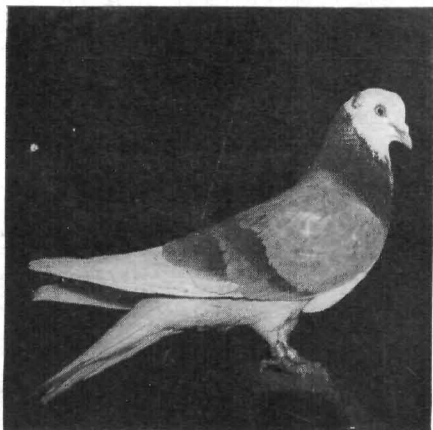


**164 KOMORNER TUMBLER**  
*Bred by Mr. Bries.*



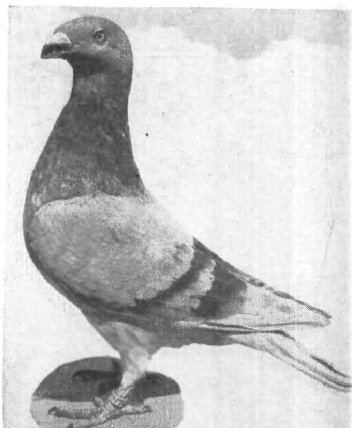
**165 VIENNESE GANSEL**  
*(Kurze Wiener) Bred by Mr. Neymann.*





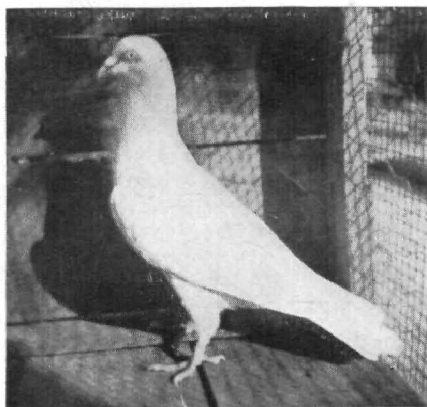
**166 DUN BADGE COCK 40 M 12569**

*Champion Pensom at 1941 Rochester, N.Y. Show, from the Pensom Roller Loft of Raymond L. Perkins, Waterbury, Conn.*

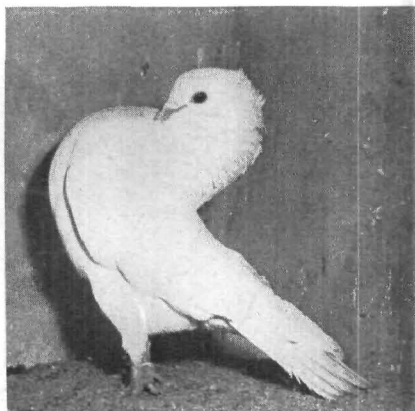


**167 1943 MEALY SHOW HOMER HEN**

*Bred by Mr. George Neuerburg, North Hollywood, Calif. Note perfect sweep, and heart-shaped wattle.*

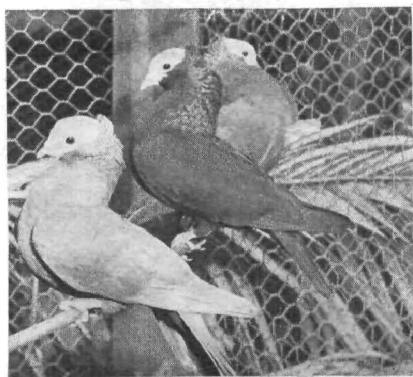


**168 CUMULET**



**169 MOOKEE PIGEON IMPORTED FROM INDIA**

*Owned by Mr. Karl Koch, San Diego, Calif.*



**170 AN INTERESTING GROUP OF MOOKEE PIGEONS**, owned by Mr. Karl Koch, San Diego, Calif., who bought them in the Calcutta, India, market.

—the *Full-head* and the *Spot* or *Fairy Swallow*. The first mentioned is recognized by a colored head-crown which reaches back to the crest. The crown's bottom edge should be on a line with the center of the mouth and run through the center of the eye. The wings and slippers are also colored, the remaining portions of the body being white.

The *Spot* or *Fairy Swallow* differs from the *Full-head* only in markings. Its forehead is marked by an oval spot and its wing-bars are white. It is bred in black, red, yellow, blue, and silver.

An exceedingly beautiful variety is the *Tiger Swallow*, so named because of alternating (tiger) colors in flight and boot feathers.

The qualities generally aimed at in breeding these toy pigeons are accuracy of markings and richness of color, in addition, of course, to length of colored muffs. A good Swallow should have a high forehead, the head being level on top to the shellcrest. The crest, thick from front to back, should run from ear to ear, forming a perfect shell standing free from the skull. The beak should be long and have a neat, small wattle. The upper mandibles of the blues, blacks, silvers, spangles, and checkers should be very dark in color; the lower, very light. In red and in yellow specimens, both mandibles should be light in color, with the upper of slightly darker shade. The eye should be dark in all varieties and be encircled by a small, light-colored cere. The skull should be wedge-shaped—narrow in front and wide at the back. The neck should be short and thick. The body should be thick at the shoulders, with the back flat. The legs, short and wide apart. The saddle, heart-shaped and distinct. The foot feathers very long and well spread, with the outer feathers curved and pointing backwards. The hock feathers should likewise be long, and free from color. The bird's carriage should be low and squatty. To improve the markings of Swallows, blacks may be crossed with reds, reds with yellows, and blue-bars with blue-barless.

## FRILLBACK

STRONGLY CURLED or twisted feathers, growing in reverse order from those of other pigeons, give this German toy its name. The main objective in breeding the Frillback is to obtain

a bird whose entire plumage shows heavy curling or frilling. The head, neck, and saddle are usually only slightly frilled.

In size *Frillbacks* resemble *Ice-pigeons*. The colors in which they occur are white, black, gray or grizzled, and sandy. The white specimens are said to have been originated in France and in Holland; the other colors in what was then Austria-Hungary. *Frillbacks* may be crested or plain-headed. The white-crested ones have long boots, whereas the plain heads—both whites and colored ones—are only slightly muffed. The best specimens of this variety are usually grizzles or mealies.

Since *Frillbacks* are somewhat delicate, they must be protected against wet and cold. They are quiet of disposition and take excellent care of their young, of which they raise from five to seven pairs a season. *Frillbacks* breed best when kept by themselves, which, by the way, is true of most varieties.

#### JACOBIN

QUEEN VICTORIA's favorite hobby was to breed Jacobins. Moreover, the sight of the Jacobin brings back memories of the days when women wore feather boas about their necks.

Today the Jacobin, which was a toy pigeon three hundred years ago, is a popular breed. It is so named because, as Moore aptly says, "it has a range of feathers inverted quite over the hinder part of the head, and reaching down on each side of the neck to the shoulders of the wings, which forms a kind of friar's hood." (The fathers of that order wear hoods to cover their baldness.) The English called the lower part of this range of feathers the chain; the Dutch, the cravat. In Moore's time, the Jacobin was popularly called the "Jack" and is said to have come from Cyprus.

During the past fifty years the Jacobin has perhaps changed more than any other fancy pigeon. Whereas originally it was regarded as the smallest of pigeons, the rule then being "the smaller, the better," today's bird is of medium size, looking considerably larger than it really is owing to its peculiar hood and chain feathering, and its length of flights and tail. While in former days a sharply feathered edge of the mane was wanted, the present tendency is to obtain a mane thick from side to side, which, instead of being as formerly sharp at the edge, is round at the back.

The Jacobin is essentially a bird of feather and carriage. Since ordinarily it is not at all easy to secure much length of feather on a small bird, if such bird does have this rare quality, it is highly valued. The Jacobin should not have the squatty carriage of former days, but an erect carriage of head and neck so that its feather arrangement may show to good advantage.

The head should be round in front and broad, the beak fairly thick, pointing slightly downward. The eyes should be white or pearl, with a small, circular wattle. The hood, dropping gracefully over the skull, should rise from the back of the skull in reverse order, covering the head as far as possible in a regular and continuous outline. The chain should be an unbroken continuation of the reverse feathers in regular sequence on each side of the neck from the hood to the rose, extending as far as possible, and meeting in front.

The rose is a round spot just above the shoulders. From it radiate the hood, chain, and mane. The last mentioned consists of long, strong feathers supporting the hood. The mane should grow well out from the juncture of the neck and shoulders, proceeding evenly upward till it meets the hood. A well-filled, rich mane is essential to the finished appearance of a good Jacobin.

The accepted markings of the Jacobin are: skull, white from the beak to the base of the hood; rump, tail, and tail-coverts, white, as are also the ten outer flights; the remainder of the body is dark in all but the white varieties. The Jacobin is bred in white, black, red, yellow, blue, and silver, all other colors being known as non-standard. The blues seem to be the most difficult to breed for quality.

Owing to its hood, the Jacobin cannot see as well as other pigeons, which frequently pounce on it unawares. Moreover, it is not given to flying much, but prefers to stay on the ground a large part of the time. The Jacobin will breed best if kept in a small pen with no other varieties. In the early days, it was regarded as a delicate bird, best raised in mild climates. Furthermore, it was considered a very poor feeder, so that its eggs and young had to be placed under foster parents. That this rather unfavorable opinion of the Jacobin is not shared by all present-day breeders is evidenced, for instance, by the experience of Fred Thompson of Georgia, who has been breeding Jacobins successfully for over thirty years.

Mr. Thompson maintains that "some fanciers consider the Jacobin dumb because of its quiet habits. I have found Jacobins to be good breeders and feeders. They may be kept in a very small loft, since they do not care much for flying. What is a more beautiful sight than to see half a dozen or more male Jacobins strut about the floor with their large feather boas flying in the air?"

Jacobins are not very sociable. If kept with other varieties, they will simply stand off by themselves. Treat Jacobins as you would other pigeons as to feed, grit, and water, but place them in a separate pen. Thus kept they will hatch and rear their own young, though at times one will kick its eggs or squabs out of the nest because it cannot see them. They eat comparatively little.

Fanciers who breed Jacobins mainly for exhibition purposes begin to train their birds at the age of three or four months so that they may show to the very best advantage. They place the young bird in a small show cage in full view of other pigeons. When it has learned to settle down and to stand quietly, they induce the bird to turn this way and that by means of a short stick similar to that used by a pigeon judge. Thus trained, the Jacobin is not easily frightened by frequent handling, as at exhibitions. As part of the preparation for the show pen, British fanciers dip their birds in rain water.

#### LAHORE

BECAUSE THE black and white of the first Lahores to be imported into England resembled that of the Martin, a small European swallow, this strangely handsome pigeon has been called by both names. However, today when Lahores are bred not only in black, but also in lavender, red, yellow, blue, and various checks, we seldom hear the term Martin used.

Lahores were first imported into England from the East Indies approximately 1770. John Matthews Eaton, writing in 1858, maintains that they were brought direct from Lahore for Lord Derby's Aviary.

The Lahore is a plump, good-sized bird, which in carriage as well as in size suggests the Lynx or the Lark. It is a quiet, graceful creature with a well-rounded breast, a stout neck, broad, light-colored beak, strong wing-butts, and short, stout,

and thickly groused legs with toes well feathered. Its attractiveness lies in the quaint coloring of the plumage, which is difficult to obtain. On a ground color of clear white appears a deep black, covering head, neck, wings, and back. In other words, the throat, chest, belly, and tail are white, as are also the feathers immediately surrounding the eyes.

The best-quality specimens of this interesting breed have always been black, the density of which is greatly enhanced by a lovely green sheen. The lavender Lahore, in reality a silver blue, is gaining in popularity. At present the chief fault of lavender Lahores seems to be white and grizzled flights. Reds and yellows, the latter often called Cinderellas, are charming colors, but rarely seen. Serious faults in Lahores are small size, white flights, colored tail feathers, incorrect markings, and a dark beak.

In breeding this beautiful pigeon, one should remember that it is not at its best until the second or third season, after which it begins to lose ground. Owing to its great vitality, the Lahore, which is a good feeder, breeds well for years.

In connection with the Lahore, Schachtzabel, the well-known German authority, mentions the Sherajeg, a pigeon of small size and markings, but having long feathers on its feet and sometimes a mottled breast. It is named after the Persian city Sheraz.

## L A R K

### *Coburg Lark, Nuremberg Lark*

THIS PIGEON derives its name from the European field lark, in that each one of its wing feathers has the characteristic "larking," that is a small, dark brown or chestnut brown triangle which points toward the tail. There are two varieties: the larger or Coburg Lark, and the smaller or Nuremberg Lark.

The *Coburg Lark* is a well-built, energetic, and alert bird, somewhat larger than a good-sized racing homer. It has a small, slightly curved head with lively, reddish-yellow eyes, straight, medium-long beak, broad breast, gently sloping back, long wings held tightly to the body but not crossed, a long, closed tail, and clean, red legs.

The foundation color of the Coburg Lark is light slate-gray, which is neither brownish nor rusty. What makes this pigeon so attractive to fanciers is its breast color, which should be light ochre, extending neither too high to the upper neck nor too low to the belly. The neck should be a dull, not a metallic or glistening, green. The back and the wings should have the light-gray foundation color with even, small, dark-gray "larking." The tail should be gray like the head, with a broad, dark-gray band. Serious faults consist of poor, interrupted, or indistinct larking, yellow or rustbrown head, thick (runtlike) head, too small size, dark eyes, or feathered legs.

Owing to its beautiful coloring and its fine breeding capacity, the Coburg Lark is very popular in Germany, especially in Thuringia. It is an energetic pigeon, which insists on its rights in any loft, as well as a fast producer of finely flavored squabs. Because of the latter quality, this pigeon is regarded as a utility breed of the first rank in Germany, whereas in this country it is strictly a fancy pigeon. I have kept Coburg Larks for many years, and I am very fond of them because they are such active and attractive creatures.

The Coburg Lark is also bred in silver, with and without narrow, dark-gray wing-bars. The breast is the usual ochre, but the wings are a clear silver-gray, making an unusually attractive combination.

The *Nuremberg Lark* is a small edition of the Coburg Lark, chiefly raised in Bavaria, especially in the vicinity of quaint Nuremberg. It differs from the Coburg in that its head, neck, and breast are a rich yellow—the deeper, the better. The ground color of wings and flights is a creamy white—the whiter, the better. The "larking" of this variety is black. The Nuremberg Lark appears also in silver, with and without narrow, black wing-bars.

## LYNX

ANOTHER COLOR pigeon regarded as an excellent squab producer by the Germans, but bred mainly for exhibition purposes in England and America, is the Polish Lynx. Though heavy-set and plump, this breed is alert and active. In shape the Lynx resembles the common German field pigeon, than which it is much larger. It has a fairly large, smooth head with

medium-long, dark beak, red eyes, a short, wide neck, very broad breast, rather short wings and tail, and short, smooth legs.

The Polish Lynx is found in solid blue and black with white wing-bars, also in blue laced and splashed, rarely in red and yellow splashed. Its wing-bars should be very wide and clear white. The lacing or splashing should be even over the entire wing. This beautiful marking cannot be seen and appreciated properly until the bird is caught and each feather is examined separately. All colors of this variety should have from seven to ten white flights in each wing. Underflighted birds should not be mated together. Serious faults are small size and breast; long, runtlike beak; uneven marking; feathered legs; dark eyes. The fault of many specimens lies in a patch of white feathers to be found on the legs or near the vent. Even though the Lynx is and should be a plump, large pigeon, usually the smaller specimens show the best coloring. Oddly enough, the female birds frequently excel the males in markings.

In breeding this handsome pigeon, the beginner should keep in mind the fact that the young Lynx, like many color pigeons, do not show the true markings until after they are finished with their first moult. Many youngsters in the nest have too much blue, and in others the white is tinged with blue or red. Not until after the first moult can the breeder tell whether a certain specimen is fit for the show-room.

Since the Polish Lynx is a rather aggressive bird, it should be kept in a pen by itself, which need not be large. It is a hardy and prolific breeder, easily kept and cared for—an ideal pigeon for any beginner. The majority of its youngsters seem to be hens. The Polish Lynx is seen frequently at British, and occasionally at American, shows. In Germany it is always to be seen at pigeon exhibitions.

## MAGPIE

A SMALL, ladylike bird with a stream-lined body of sharply contrasting colors—that is the modern Magpie. In its extremely trim appearance and alert carriage, this pigeon suggests the soldier on parade.

Originally one of the German toy pigeons, the Magpie, thanks to the efforts of such British breeders as Bracey, Cooke,



and Sir Frank Warner, is today in a class by itself. By crossing the Magpie with the French *Bagadais* (Carrier), these breeders lengthened the bird's head, neck, and legs, the while shortening its whole contour. Of the original Magpie, which seems to have lost its popularity in Germany, only the markings and the color remain.

The Magpie is a gracile bird of slim, shallow body. Its shoulders, pointing upward, should, in good specimens, be prominent but not heavy; on each side of them should appear two small muscles. The back should be carried at a sharp upward angle with hollowness sufficient for the closely folded tail to be carried half an inch above the ground, as if it were a single feather. The head, which should be flat, long, and slightly curved, is usually judged on the basis of front, top, and back-skull. Its highest part should appear directly over the eyes. The beak should be long, flesh-colored, and free from stains or blemishes. Magpies with fine-end mandibles thick at the base are, owing to their resemblance to show homers, usually taboo. The eye of this breed, set in the center of the head immediately below the highest part and in direct horizontal line with the mouth or incision of the beak, should be fish or milk-white. Its cere should be narrow, close-fitting, and of a deep-red, coral tint. The neck should be long, slender, finely feathered, and tapering. "Snakiness" here is needful to make the whole bird appear trim and graceful. The legs should be long, thin, deep red, and set as close to the vent as possible.

Though of secondary importance, the color of the Magpie should be distinctly cut. The body, shoulders, coverts, and flights should be white; the head, neck, front of the chest, back, rump and tail, colored. Popular Magpie colors are black, red, yellow, blue, silver, cream, and dun. The finest Magpies have usually been the blacks.

The next time you attend a pigeon or poultry show, look at the Magpies. They are prolific breeders and reliable feeders. Their trim shape, graceful carriage, and exceedingly showy plumage should win for this breed more enthusiastic fanciers than it has. There is really no reason why this strikingly attired pigeon should not become as popular in America as it is in England.

In answer to my question, "Why the Magpie?", Mr. Frank Hahn, prominent New York breeder of this variety, replied

that, "The Magpie gives all a fancier can ask in a pigeon—symmetry, grace, and a variety of colors and markings. A first-class Magpie is the acme of style in pigeonhood. It is tall, alert, erect in carriage, and perfect in proportion. In England the Magpie is often called the queen of pigeons. Its colors are red, yellow, blue, silver, and dun; then there are the rare creams and pearls, in addition to the beautiful blacks. Their colors, especially in the blacks, are enhanced by a handsome sheen. Magpies are good breeders and feed their own young. Good specimens bring good prices, between \$50 and \$100 being frequently paid for club show champions, which, of course, are not bred every season." Mr. Hahn's praise of the Magpie is based on long experience.

#### MALTESE

A PIGEON which used to serve solely as a squab producer, but which is now frequently seen in the show room is the Maltese. It is a proud and graceful bird, first brought to Europe from the shores of the Mediterranean. Owing to their short, erect, hen-like tails, the Maltese, as well as the Florentine, the Hungarian, and the Strasser are usually classified as hen or gallinaceous pigeons. The Maltese has a turned-up rump similar to that of the fantail pigeon. It walks like a hen, taking long steps, but with a free and graceful action. An ideal Maltese should stand approximately fifteen inches high.

The modern Maltese, bred in America for the past thirty or forty years, is so decided an improvement on the original bird, called Leghorn Runt, as to stamp it a distinctly American product. As a matter of fact, European fanciers have on repeated occasions imported American-bred Maltese to improve their own stocks, thus acknowledging the superior quality of our product.

The Maltese is a large, high-standing, and high-stepping pigeon with a short, compact body. The British call it "boat-shaped." This bird carries its long, curved head high on a well-arched neck. When driving, the male should throw his head back almost to his tail. Maltese should have close-fitting feathers, especially on the breast, shoulders, and vent, which will give the bird a sleek, muscular appearance. The wings should be carried close to the body, their butts powerful and protrud-

ing. The flights should be short. The tail, very short, almost square at the tip, should be carried upward. The thighs should be long and set well apart. The legs should be red, straight, long, and free from feathers.

The Maltese is bred in white, black, blue, yellow, red, dun, and silver. In breeding this variety for exhibition purposes, color is of great importance. In discussing this problem, Dr. Geo. E. Kleeman, noted Maltese breeder, holds that there is too much haphazard color breeding in vogue today:

"Remember that the male breeds for color and the female for type. To develop stronger and larger birds I have mated white males with blue females. From such a cross one may get whites with dark beaks or birds splashed blue and white, or solid blues, or solid whites. If one breeds the whites back to solid whites in the second and third generations, one will have increased the vitality of one's birds noticeably.

"Blues mated with blacks make a poor combination, since these colors do not run true. The blacks raised from such crossings are not really black, but smoky; and the blues do not show a clear-laced blue. Avoid mating a light-meated bird to a dark-meated one, as the result will be birds with poor foundation colors.

"Since silvers are delicately colored birds, they should be mated only with silvers for foundation color, or with blues if these are too dark. Duns are produced from birds of various colors. A black male mated to a chocolate dun hen will invariably give dun and black youngsters. Duns raised from blues or silvers have barred wings and should never be paired with blacks. Blacks mated to chocolate duns which have been raised from blacks or duns, make the best black foundation color.

"To breed splashes, start with a black male and a white female. Mate the offspring, which will be splashed, with another solid black, and you will raise some very pretty and true-colored splashes.

"Since type is a most essential factor in breeding Maltese for show purposes, line breeding is often resorted to. The best results are obtained by breeding father to daughter, and mother to son. Do not, however, mate brother to sister, since such inbreeding is likely to produce weaklings. While line-bred birds make fine show birds, they are not suited for

the breeding pen since frequently their eggs are not fertile."

Since Maltese are splendid breeders, producing annually from six to eight pairs of white-meated squabs averaging a pound apiece, they are regarded as so-called dual-purpose pigeons—suitable for both exhibition and table purposes. As a matter of fact, however, most Maltese bred in the United States are used for show purposes.

## MODENA

THE PIGEON with "it" in generous measure, the Modena is at once one of the oldest, most graceful, and in America most popular breeds. Such a heavy favorite has it become that fanciers throughout the country entered over four hundred specimens in a recent national pigeon show, their number being exceeded only by that of White Kings.

So named after the city in Italy and called "Colombi da volo," i.e. flying pigeons, by the Italian fanciers, Modenas were first mentioned in 1327, the date of the Modenese Statute. They were used in a sort of aerial warfare and sport by the Triganieri, which is carried on in modified form to this day. The lofts which rise from the housetops are surrounded by little platforms on which the Triganieri stand, flag in hand, to guide the pigeons in the direction of their flight. At a given signal, usually a whistle—in the early days a cornet was sounded—the birds return to their loft.

The whole purpose of this sport, indulged in only during the winter months, is to train pigeons to fly according to the waving of the flag and ultimately to entice members of the "enemy's" flock away and to capture them. Usually the pigeons are first taught to fly in circles and to return to the home loft immediately the signal is given. By means of another signal, they are taught to join an "enemy's" flock which is flying for the same purpose, with a view to confuse the direction of its flight. Once this purpose has been achieved to the owner's satisfaction, he gives yet other signals to make his charges, accompanied by some enemy birds, fly swiftly back and forth over his loft before he finally whistles to them to drop down and be rewarded with feed.

Originally this Italian sport was followed with four different aims in view: first, purely on terms of free rivalry, providing

for the mutual return and exchange of all captured birds; secondly, on terms of professional sportsmanship, by which the captured pigeons were returned at an agreed price; third, on terms of enmity, the participants being under no obligation to restore the birds to their former owners; lastly, on terms of bitter hatred, under which the captured bird was immediately hung (dead) from the platform in full view of the enemy's loft. Today the sport has become more humane and is carried on *à la* *lira*, that is each bird is redeemed on payment of a Modenese lira. It should be noted at this point that the type of the flying Modena is quite different from that of our modern show Modena.

The fact that there are mentioned no fewer than one hundred fifty varieties of the Modena, representing color variations, testifies eloquently to the zeal with which and the length of time for which this popular pigeon has been bred. Approximately half this number belong to the Schietti or single coloring, either plain or fancy; the other half to the Gazzi (magpie colors) variety.

What the Modena lacks in size, is more than compensated for not only by its beautifully contrasting markings but by the charming manner of its carriage. Of the numerous fancy pigeons which have graced my lofts, none seemed to show more genuine pride in just being alive than the Modena.

The Modena is a short, "cobby" bird, its total length not exceeding ten inches. Its head should be round, smooth, and nicely curved; the neck, slightly arched and full. The beak is about three-fourths of an inch long; black with the dark-colored birds and light with all others. The wattles are short, small, and of whitish color. Eyes are orange, with narrow, light-colored ceres. The breast is broad, evenly curved. The shoulders are wide, the back short. The flights, carried somewhat loosely, do not quite reach the end of the tail, and are not crossed. The tail, which is approximately three and a half inches long, is slightly tilted upward, giving the bird its most important property—carriage. The legs are of medium length and very straight. If a specimen has true Modena type, it is well rounded in every particular.

As stated, there are two principal classes of this variety—the Gazzi and the Schietti. The Gazzi is white except for the head, the upper part of the throat, wings, flights, and tail, all of

which are colored. It is bred in bronze, blue, silver, black, red, yellow, and other colors. The *Schietti* (except the white self) has a colored body and is bred in bronze, blue, silver, black, red, yellow, argent blue or black laced, argent red with yellow lacings, and other colors. More or less popular subvarieties of the *Schietti* are the *Argent* and the *Magnani*. The *Argent* differs from the main variety in that the ground color of its wings is white, the edges of the wing feathers being "laced" with color. The *Magnani* is mottled or spangled over the body, wings, and tail. A well-spangled breast is hard to produce. Red is the most popular color among *Magnanis*, whose colors, whatever they are, should be as evenly distributed as possible. To breed the more delicately colored *Modenas* requires a good measure of intelligent patience and perseverance.

Some years ago a certain show boasted one thousand entries of *Modenas* alone. The story is told of an experienced old pigeon man who was acting as show secretary. He noticed an exhibitor taking a beautiful little bronze *Gazzi Modena* out of its coop and talking to it as if he knew its language. And when he returned the bird to its coop, it would strut as if to thank its owner for all the attention bestowed on it. Within a week the show secretary had taught this pigeon to come to the front of the coop and dance about with tail feathers spread out—as proud as a peacock on parade.

*Modenas* are fast breeders and excellent feeders. They may be tamed quickly and can, owing to their small size, be raised successfully in a small loft.

## MONTAUBAN

THIS LARGE pigeon, named after a town in southwestern France, is of Italian origin, having presumably been created from the *Campagna* pigeon. Except for a broad, loose-feathered crest, which most specimens of this breed bear, and slightly longer legs, the Montauban looks very much like a Runt, than which it is somewhat smaller.

There is really nothing particularly distinctive about this pigeon, which may be described as a rather ungainly, long-bodied, and heavily-feathered bird, whose long wings almost drag on the ground, whose tail is very broad, and whose legs are sometimes slightly muffed. Montaubans as long as twenty-

four inches have been bred. An enthusiastic breeder in Germany reports the weight of old males at two pounds, that of old females at twenty-five ounces, and that of youngsters at the age of five weeks, at approximately eighteen ounces.

The Montauban occurs only in single colors: blue, black, brown, and white, rarely in yellow, red, and dun. In his book "Pigeons Domestiques," La Perre de Roo maintains that the white specimens are the most sought after by fanciers. He regards the Montauban as an excellent feeder and steady producer of squabs with very large breasts.

Whoever would keep the Montauban must provide spacious pens to accommodate these somewhat clumsy, heavy giants, which fly but little and which are very jealous. Perhaps the two leading reasons why Montaubans are not kept more extensively, even in Europe, are their heavy consumption of feed and their clumsiness in breeding.

#### MOOKEE

FROM FAR-OFF India comes the Mookee pigeon, not often seen in America. In general appearance, particularly in its arched and trembling neck, it suggests the Fantail, but it lacks this breed's showy tail. Wright, the British authority, claims that the neck-trembling, being an inherent trait of the Mookee, was grafted on to the Fantail variety, whose home is also India.

At any rate, the Mookee is peak-crested, white-capped to a line running below the eyes, and carries its flat, small but longish head back. Its beak is of medium length, the upper mandible being light, the lower dark in color. Its prominent, dark eyes are encircled by narrow, light ceres. The neck of this pigeon is rather long and swanlike, carried back, and subject to an almost constant trembling motion. The Mookee's back is rather short. Its tail is narrow, flat, and close, containing twelve feathers. Wright has seen this Indian pigeon in *all* colors. However, it is commonly bred in black, red, yellow, and blue with black wing-bars. The two longest flight feathers of this breed should be white.

More or less common faults are lack of strong color, inadequate head markings, little or no trembling motion, and an

unequal number of flights (such as one and three, or two and five) or more than three flights.

Credit for a rather recent introduction of the rare and fascinating Mookee to American pigeon lovers belongs to Mr. Karl Koch, a California fancier, who bought it in 1941 in the Calcutta market, where this variety is greatly outnumbered by Lahores, Homers, Fantails, Rollers, and "just pigeons." Commenting on his birds, this breeder writes: "The solid black and the solid brown ones have white heads, and the white ones have fawn tails and rumps. All specimens have short, arched necks, are crested, and tremble like Fantails, but they do not have any white flight feathers except for one brown squab which has a few white primaries. When I saw these handsome shakers, I bought the white ones first, then some brown ones and later some blacks, but the last mentioned proved to be two hens. My Mookees have so far produced more hens than cocks. I also brought some white pigeons with crests from India that look like tumblers. These small but very prolific pigeons I call 'Bengalese' since they come also from India."

#### MOORHEAD (MOHRENKOPF)

##### *Schmalkaldener Moorhead*

THE MOORHEAD is a small but robust bird with a well-arched head and a long, slender neck. Its characteristic is a broad shell-crest which continues along the neck to the shoulders, forming a mane of short feathers. This pigeon should have a short, thick, richly feathered neck. Its breast should be broad and well carried forward. The shoulders should also be broad. The wings, powerful and well closed against the body. The short legs are usually covered with long, thick feathers. The tail is short and well closed. The beak is long, slender, and pitch-black; in red and yellow Moorheads it is light in color. The eyes of Moorheads should be very dark, enclosed by a narrow cere of grayish blue.

So far as markings are concerned, the Moorhead is white except for head, bib, and tail, which may be black, blue, red, or yellow. However, blues, reds, and yellows are rarely seen, the others being the more popular colors. The tail, colored on the



upper and lower sides, should be sharply distinct from the body.

The Moorhead is a ready flyer, breeder, and feeder. Its natural shyness can be overcome by gentle treatment. The strongly contrasting colors give this pigeon a very striking appearance.

Very much like the Moorhead is the *Schmalkaldener Moorhead*, a German pigeon, between fourteen and fifteen and a-half inches long, squatty, full-breasted, and heavily muffed. Its distinction lies in the thickly feathered hood which completely encloses the head, giving the bird the appearance of a Jacobin. However, the hood is not as fully developed as in the Jacobin, leaving the front of the head including the eyes free.

The *Schmalkaldener Moorhead* is bred only in black. It is known to be a good, though shy, breeder, and should not be much disturbed when it is on eggs or young.

## NUN (NOENNCHEN)

ORIGINATED IN Germany, where it is still extensively bred, and so named because of the veil it wears, the Nun is a very old and well-established breed. It is a graceful, compact little bird. Its beauty lies in the markings of its plumage, even though the crest is considered one of this pigeon's leading characteristics. Excepting for the head, bib, flights, and tail, the Nun is white. It is a very friendly pigeon which can be tamed easily.

The Nun's shell or crest should be thick from front to back, and be carried erect. It should extend well around the back of the head, ending at each side in a small curl. Colored feathers in the shell constitute a serious fault. The shell or crest is a most difficult thing to get perfect in Nuns.

In the early days, six colored primary flight feathers in each wing were considered perfect. Today's standard calls for 10 x 10 colored primary flights, which, however, is not often attained. A bird with an equal number of colored flights in each wing is rated superior to one with odd numbers. Thus an 8 x 8 is better than an 8 x 9 or an 8 x 10. No white feathers should appear among the colored flights. For a perfect marking there should be ten colored primary flight feathers in each wing.

The Nun's tail should be short and solidly colored, like the head and the bib. White tail feathers are not allowed. The remainder of the body including the shell is white. The eyes should be of silver-white color, with finely textured, dark-red ceres, which in black Nuns are almost black. The beak should be short and strong; its color in blacks and blues should be ebony black; in duns and reds, dark brown; in yellows and silvers, pale pink. The colors in which the Nun appears are black, yellow, red, and dun, with black showing the finest and most attractive specimens.

Fulton maintains that the Nun would be much more popular "but for the trimming so unblushingly practiced on this pigeon confessedly above all others. Probably more Nuns have been disqualified or passed for being trimmed, especially in the crest, than all other varieties put together."

Mr. W. J. Smillie, an experienced Nun breeder, writes in the *American Pigeon Keeper* in part as follows: "The Nun is a very friendly pigeon. If looked after properly, it will let itself be lifted off the perch without offering much resistance. I have Nuns which will fly to me whenever I enter the loft. In feeding Nuns, a change of diet from winter to breeding feed is necessary. In the breeding season I use maples, tares, and a little wheat. In winter, I feed cinquantina maize, wheat, and maples. During the moulting season I give them some linseed, as I believe the oil helps to put a nice sheen on their feathers. Before I send my birds to the show, I give them some canary seed to keep them in good condition."

## POUTERS

*English Pouter, Pigmy Pouter, French Pouter*

IF A pigeon may be said to be both proud and clownish, it is the Pouter. At the shows he attracts marked attention from early till late, for people never tire of seeing this slim, long-legged chap strut about, his crop, or globe, as it is usually called by fanciers, round and full like a small toy balloon. Two other qualities which endear the Pouter to all pigeon lovers are his liveliness and his tameness. He is ever on the go, tripping along daintily, as if just walking were too ordinary for this show-off of show-offs. It is very easy to make pets out of

Pouters because they are so easily tamed. Of course, the Pouter fancier *has* to tame his birds so that they will strut about and perform to their best possible advantage when they are in the judging coop at the show competing with other expert strutters.

To trace the Pouter's origin is difficult. Even such eminent authority as Robert Fulton has to confess ignorance on this point. He contents himself with the statement that "probably the Dutch Cropper" and the Runt (!) are among this pigeon's ancestors, for "the modern Pouter and the Runt have much in common, if indeed they have not descended at no very distant date from one stock; and the Runt still makes almost the only available cross."

Always the Pouter has been recognized as one of the finest of fancy pigeons and one perhaps farthest removed from the blue rock pigeon which, according to Darwin, is the common ancestor of all domesticated varieties. In Europe as well as in America, the Pouter's popularity has been the fancier's delight. To this day, England and Scotland lead in raising fine Pouters, though, to be sure, many high-rating specimens are bred in America. We give tribute to the English for their fruitful efforts in producing such a unique pigeon by calling it the *English Pouter*.

The two most popular varieties of Pouters are the *English Pouter* and the *Pigmy Pouter*, the difference being almost wholly one of size. Whereas the English Pouter should measure sixteen inches in height from the floor to the top of his head, the Pigmy in a similar standing position measures only approximately ten or eleven inches.

Size and figure are the Pouter's chief properties—his *sine qua non*. As a matter of fact, in judging Pouters, body structure is given eighty-nine points as against eleven for color and markings. The body should be long and slender, the waist narrow. The back should also be narrow, with high shoulders forming the much desired hollow back and flat sides with a shallow girth. The narrow back usually reduces the width of the front, which on many specimens appears corpulent—a serious defect.

When inflated, the Pouter's globe should be round, large, and under full control. At the point where the globe joins the body, it should be "well sprung," forming a sharp angle as if a

string had been tied around it at that particular point. The diameter of the globe should be from one and a-half to twice the width of the body at the shoulders.

The Pouter's legs should be as long as possible, with the knee-joint appearing in the center. They should be well set back on the body and be so close together that when viewed from the side, they seem to touch each other. Moreover, except for a slight bend at the knee, the legs should be straight. Either, perfect straightness, making the legs appear like stilts, or too much bending, termed cow-hock, is a serious fault. Finally, the legs should be "stocking" limbs—be covered with short, white feathers down to the feet, broadening on the toes into "slippers." The feet should turn outward, making the Pouter *not* pigeon-toed.

The Pouter's wings should be small and narrow when folded, showing a good deal of the body above the thighs, with the flights resting on the tail. When the bird is playing, the tail should clear the floor nicely. It should be narrow, closely folded, and look like a single feather when the bird is at rest. The Pouter's eyes are small, as are the ceres. In white specimens, the eyes are dark or "bull"; in colored birds, yellow or orange. The head and beak are dove-shaped; the wattle is small and fine in texture.

Among the standard colors for English Pouters are white, black, blue, red, and yellow. In the case of all but the first mentioned, the underparts of the body, sides, legs, and primary flights are white. Moreover, there is a half-moon (crescent) white marking on the globe, reaching from just below the eyes right across the globe. A dozen white feathers should appear on the shoulders in the shape of a rose. Blue Pouters must have a clear sky-blue with well-outlined black bars on wings and tail. Black Pouters should have a green in a bluish sheen. Silvers should have a soft, even silver with dark bars on wings and tail. Reds and yellows, which are the most difficult to breed up to standard, should be rich in color and have white tails.

English Pouters are indifferent breeders. They much rather strut about than sit on the nest or feed their young. For this reason foster parents are used to hatch and rear the youngsters. Since young Pouters are delicate creatures, it is best to use a small or medium-sized breed as foster parents, certainly not

Kings or Carneaux. Some fanciers use homers with good success.

To breed English Pouters which will win in the show room is at best a trying task, requiring the utmost patience year after year. This is true largely because this variety of pigeons has been developed to a comparatively high state of perfection. Apropos of this whole matter, the late Mr. A. Menze, well-known breeder of this variety, wrote me: "The English Pouter is truly a fancy pigeon, from the breeding of which one must not expect financial returns worth mentioning. On the contrary, the breeder must content himself with the thought that he is trying to improve a pigeon for the pleasure of producing something superior to that which he has seen or has himself. The path to achievement is slow and rocky, but if a degree of success is reached, the enjoyment derived from it is priceless. To breed English Pouters year after year and be content with the results usually obtained requires more determination and patience than the average fancier can muster."

Except for size, the *Pigmy Pouter*, in shape and form is essentially the same as the English Pouter. Ordinarily, the smaller the Pigmy, the better his quality. Some fanciers maintain that it is more difficult to breed a good Pigmy Pouter than it is to breed a good English Pouter, since the former has to combine many symmetrical qualities in so small a body. To produce a Pigmy ten inches high with all the important qualities in correct proportion is a real achievement.

In the United States, the Pigmy Pouter is exceedingly popular. His playfulness accounts in large part for this increasing and well-deserved popularity. Moreover, unlike the English Pouter, the Pigmy is a good breeder and rearer. At present two clubs, the National Pigmy Pouter Club and the American Pigmy Pouter Club boost this handsome variety.

In a recent letter to me, Mr. Chas. W. Edwards, an enthusiastic Pigmy Pouter breeder of Ohio, gives detailed testimony to his favorite breed of pigeons:

"The modern Pigmy Pouter is a bird of action, beauty, and charm. It is the only pigeon which can be classed as having personality. A well-bred Pigmy Pouter is an unending source of pleasure and profit to its owner. Today the Pigmy is one of the most popular breeds of pigeons in the United States.

"Some pigeons are studies in curves; others, in straight lines. The Pigmy, a combination of straight lines and curves, makes the breed twice as desirable, twice as beautiful in the fancier's eye. Being rather small, these pigeons do not need the loft room which the larger breeds require. Furthermore, their feed consumption is much less than that of the larger breeds. One of their finest qualities is that they feed their own young, for more solicitous parents than Pigmy Pouters cannot be found.

"Pigmy Pouters love the companionship of man, and they are never happier than when their keeper is near. They will coo and strut, clap their wings, and parade before him time and again. The male will usually first inflate his crop with air. Then, looking like a toy balloon on a stick, with his wings tucked close, head up, tail down, he will strut back and forth, raising his feet and setting them down like the drum major of a band on parade. The female's antics are somewhat different. Call to her and she will spread her tail, inverted fan shape, and with a very graceful motion, she will sweep up almost to you. Then, with a coquettish twist of her body, she will turn and walk away. This performance she will repeat over and over again—as long as you care to 'work' with the bird.

"Pigmy Pouters love to be handled. This trait makes them ideal pets. Many birds become so attached to their owner that they follow him wherever he goes. I once had a black pigmy hen that was very affectionate. She would often perch on my shoulder. Deliberately I would pay no attention to her when entering the loft, and would back up to one of the perches or walking boards. She would fly up there, walk in behind me, and peck at my hair or ear, trying her level best to attract my attention.

"The Pigmy Pouter comes in seven colors—black, red, yellow, blue, silver, white, and all other colors or combinations of colors, such as splashes and the like. In make-up the bird is as follows: head, small and dainty; globe, large and round; body, long and narrow; wings, narrow and tucked in close; legs, extremely long and as close together as possible; leg feathers extending over the foot, forming a so-called slipper. Tail, very short. Markings should be distinctive: head, globe, chest, back, and tail are colored. The feet, legs, underbody, a group of wing feathers, flight feathers, and a crescent on the globe are white.

Exceptions are the tails of the reds and yellows, which should be white.

"In almost every country of the world there are breeders banded together to promote the cause of the Pigmy Pouter. The slogan of the American Pigmy Pouter Club is 'Particular People Prefer Pigmies.' If my reader is not now breeding the peppy little Pigmy, I would recommend that he purchase a few birds and become one of the great band of particular people."

The *French Pouter* or *Cropper* (*Pigeon boulang*), which is bred with the round or else with the oval globe, resembles the English Pouter. However, it is clean-legged and not as large, its total length being from eighteen to twenty inches. A good specimen of this variety should show three more or less distinct curves as formed by the crop, the breast, and the thigh.

This vivacious and elegant pigeon occurs in practically the same colors as those of the English Pouter. Feeders are required to raise the young French Pouters. Serious faults of this breed are a small crop, short neck, broad breast and back, and short legs.

## ROLLERS

*Oriental Roller, Birmingham Roller, West of England Tumbler*

THE *Turkish* or *Oriental Roller* is doubtless the oldest breed of performing flyers, it having received mention in Persian manuscripts of the twelfth century. Ever since, this pigeon has been bred for its remarkable flying and rolling qualities. It was first introduced into England about 1870, being considered a distinct variety of the Tumbler, than which it had a longer head and back, a stronger beak, and a flatter head.

The characteristics of the Roller are its long, high tail, consisting of from fourteen to eighteen feathers, one lying over the other in two divisions; its drooping wings, pearl eyes, solid color, and especially its lack of the oil gland. The Oriental Roller is a swift flyer which, if trained well, will perform satisfactorily in kits. Rarely is the performance of two birds alike. Most breeders of this fascinating pigeon want birds which

spin long, fast, and tight, which trick if performed often is likely to tire them quickly. So far as the nature of the roll is concerned, that is, its depth and its frequency, some fanciers prefer short spinning birds in almost constant action, while others favor those with the longer spin. Performance, that is rolling or spinning, is useless unless the bird has the necessary flying stamina to protect it against accidents likely to occur during the rolling.

Rollers are best flown on clear, calm days. Many kits of fine birds are lost each season in wind, rain, or snow storms. Feeding his birds lightly morning and late afternoon, an experienced fancier flies them within half an hour or an hour after their morning meal for an hour or more. If his birds fly too high and out of sight, he lessens the quantity of feed; if, on the other hand, they seem unwilling to go into the air, he increases the rations. Other fanciers prefer to fly their birds hungry so as to avoid violent rolling with full crops, which often choke the birds to death.

Mr. Burrell Richards, a Georgia fancier, trains his rollers by letting the youngsters out on the roof of his loft as soon as they can fly a little, leaving them there undisturbed. When after five or six outings of this nature, the birds have become thoroughly acquainted with their surroundings, he waves them into the air by means of a long pole which has a flag tied to its end. During the first week or two, he allows them to settle wherever they wish. Thereafter he keeps them flying for at least fifteen or twenty minutes, chasing into the air those birds which are inclined to settle on the roofs of neighboring buildings. Gradually the birds are kept in the air, at a height of from three to fifteen hundred feet, longer and longer, not infrequently exceeding four hours. Those members of the flying kit which drop out first, and repeatedly before the allotted training time is up, are disposed of as undesirable. The important consideration is to get the kit to fly a certain length of time in perfect concert. When the birds are to descend, the trainer blows a whistle, which they hear no matter how high they may be flying, or else he throws a white Fantail on top of the loft, a so-called "dropper," whose sudden appearance signals the birds to drop down together and to enter the loft immediately in order to get their feed.



The *Birmingham Roller*, so named after the city in England in which this pigeon was developed, is a neat, small bird with a shallow keel and a long, narrow body. It carries its wings above a tightly folded tail of twelve feathers. It occurs in practically all colors, since in breeding this variety no attention is paid to color and markings. The Birmingham Roller ascends into the air gracefully, flying with great ease and abandon, not with the nervous dart of the Oriental Roller. Its roll consists of a series, numbering five to twenty or more, of backward somersaults executed with lightning speed in a line straight as an arrow from the beginning to the end of the roll, when the pigeon resumes flying in the same direction as before.

In England, five different classes of Birmingham Rollers are recognized:

- the competition kit: it flies as a compact group, its members engaging simultaneously in short, snappy spins.
- the average kit: its members fly well and take moderately long spins.
- the deep spinners: the birds go into ball-like spins from twenty-five to fifty feet in length.
- the high-flyers: the birds are trained to fly long and high, spinning only occasionally.
- the combination spinners and flyers: the birds will ascend high into the air, remaining an hour or more, spinning mainly when dropping.

There are fanciers—and their number in America is large—who, favoring high and long flying, prefer the *West of England Tumbler*, which occurs in the same colors as the Roller, but which does little rolling. As a matter of fact, the tendency to breed for either—ability to roll or ability to fly long and high—but *not for both*, should be more and more encouraged. If frequent and deep rolling, which is very exhausting, is demanded, then the bird's tendency to fly long and high should be appreciably curtailed and vice versa.

Since Roller pigeons are born with the instinct to roll, they fly quickly into the air, as if they were eager to perform their stunts, from which they seem to derive genuine pleasure. Some authorities maintain that the tendency to roll is a form of vol-

untary epilepsy enjoyed by the birds. Many pigeon fanciers derive great enjoyment from breeding Rollers. These aerial acrobats have in some instances remained in the air more than nine hours at a time.

#### SCANDAROOON (NUERNBERGER BAGDETTE)

THE PIGEON with the longest nose resembling a fierce bird of prey—that is the Scandaroon. First brought to Europe from Bagdad, it is popular in Germany, especially in Nuremberg. To many people this pigeon's long, curved beak and face are anything but handsome. However, its color is so very rich and pure as to call forth admiration whenever it is seen.

In size and other general aspects the Scandaroon resembles the English Carrier. As mentioned, its head is its chief peculiarity. A good specimen should measure nearly two inches from the center of the eye to the tip of the beak. The longer and the more crooked the beak, the better the quality of the bird. In addition to being prominent, the beak should be very long, strong, well curved, blunt at the tip, and white. The beak wattle should be long and full, fine and even in texture, neither flat nor high enough to spoil the profile of the face. The skull should be long and narrow, well curved from back to crown, and free from angles, warts, or lumps.

In black and in white Scandaroons, the eyes should be dark ("bull"); in reds and in blues, a deep, bright red; in yellows, a pale red or orange. The ceres should be commensurate in size with the skull and beak wattle, fit closely to the skull, and be of a rich flesh-color. The neck should be very long, slender, and curved like that of a swan; the chest wide, the back flat. The wings should be short but strong, with the flights well folded. The tail should likewise be short. The legs should be strong and long, with sufficient thigh to hold the body well up. Scandaroons are bred in red, black, yellow, white, and blue, with markings similar to those of the Magpie.

Since Scandaroons are inclined to fight, they should be kept by themselves and be given ample room. Their flight is powerful and quick, but hardly dexterous. As a whole, the Scandaroon is a good breeder, though it is not wise to disturb it when the young are first hatched. Ordinarily no feeders are

required for this variety. Scandaroons to be used for breeding should have long, deeply curved faces and very stout beaks, and should be selected with great care.

### SHOW HOMER

A LONG roman nose and a very large head easily distinguish the Show Homer from all other varieties. Of comparatively recent origin, this good-sized breed was first produced in England shortly after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, at which time the Homer Racing sport was at its height on the Continent. In carrying out their aim to improve the ordinary flying homer for show purposes, the British fanciers sacrificed the bird's homing ability, for the modern Show Homer is at best a very clumsy flyer that quickly exhausts himself. The original Show Homer differed from the Flying Homer only in that it had a more curved head and beak.

To produce a pigeon with an oval head, but without a prominent forehead or top above a heart-shaped wattle, and with a medium-long, thick beak and a white eye appearing in the center of the head, the Flying Homer was crossed with the Show Antwerp to furnish head volume and body size; with the Scandaroon to obtain length of head, curve of top skull, and strength of lower beak; with the Cumulet, which is a white Highflyer, to produce a fine, white or pearl eye and a flat-lying, V-shaped wattle. Other breeds which figured more or less prominently in originating the Show Homer are the Smerle (according to *Fulton Cravate Français*—an owl variety) and the Dragoon. Since not all breeders of Show Homers proceeded in the same manner to attain their ends, it is now difficult to say which breeds figured most prominently in the production of the Show Homer.

The Show Homer of today attracts much favorable attention wherever it is exhibited, though its popularity in the United States has waned appreciably. It is a broad-shouldered bird with a short, good-sized body, combining in its carriage, gracefulness and strength. Its head—the principal feature of this breed—should present an unbroken curve from the tip of the beak to the back skull, where the curve should follow the line of the neck gently. The face should be well filled in, and be without angles. The throat should be clean and free from

gullet. The neck should be of medium length, getting broader towards the shoulders. The beak should be slightly curved and stout, but not as thick as that of the Antwerp, black and long without overbalancing the remainder of the face. The beak wattle should be fine, of powdery white tint, and shaped like a split heart. The eye should be prominent and white, a red eye being a serious defect. The cere should be very fine, hard in texture, close fitting, and as darkly colored as possible. The body should be short, wedge-shaped, with a broad chest, and tapering well away at the vent. The flights should be short and broad-webbed, their ends rising well over the tail. The body feathers should be short, hard, and tightly fitting. The tail should also be short, compact, and carried off the floor. The legs should be strong, straight, clean, and set well back on the body. The entire bird should appear not clumsy, but graceful and alert.

The late Chas. F. Wagner, noted American authority, commented in the *American Pigeon Journal* on the Show Homer as follows: "This pigeon is hard to produce in correct lines and still harder to keep in such lines. However, these difficulties make the task of breeding it only more interesting. A Show Homer which keeps its cere and wattle for four or five years without its growing coarse is a valuable bird in any loft. The first thing a beginner should do is to get the standard and to study the outline of the bird's head. If he has an eye for beautiful detail, he will soon discover that the correct curve is only to be found with the fullness of beak at the beginning of the wattle. It is very difficult to breed a bird with a perfect beak on a perfect front. Ninety per cent of the Show Homers in America have too long tails and flights.

Being equipped with a powerful head and beak, the Show Homer is a match for any pigeon. Best breeding results are obtained by keeping this variety in a separate pen. Though the Show Homer is at best an awkward flyer, it is advisable to afford him a roomy fly-pen, where he can exercise freely. As stated, it is difficult to breed this pigeon true to form, which is perhaps the reason why it is not as suitable for the beginner in the fancy as are certain other varieties.

The Show Homer is bred in black-check, blue-check, silver-check, red, red-check, blue, silver, mealy or cream, yellow, and white.

Mr. George Neuerburg, who first bred Show Homers in 1910, maintains that since this variety requires perhaps more skillful handling than other, more prolific varieties, it does not have particular appeal for beginners. This fancier states that, being large and rather awkward, Show Homers are inclined to break their eggs and to crush newly hatched squabs. As a breed, these pigeons are pugnacious, yet rather inactive. More often than not, a good show specimen turns out to be a somewhat indifferent breeder. Show Homers are not easy to breed to a type approaching the ideal, because they were originated from several varieties and particularly because the head of a Show Homer is very different from that of the average fancy pigeon. Almost every fancier has his own ideas concerning the relative importance of the various head properties of the Show Homer, to which the standard allots a total of fifty-three points.

To breed Show Homers successfully, this noted California fancier advises keeping not more than four, or at most six, pairs in each pen. Even more satisfactory is the use of the individual pen, three feet wide, four feet deep, and thirty inches high. Preferably each pen should be equipped with a floor of half-inch hardware cloth and with an easily removable metal tray underneath it to catch the droppings. For nests Mr. Neuerburg favors the use of ordinary, glazed-crockery mixing bowls, nine inches in diameter and five inches in depth, filling them two-thirds with fine sand and using no other nesting material whatsoever. All birds kept in the larger pens are supplied with *running* water. In order to keep his birds as active and as healthy as possible, this breeder feeds twice daily and never more than his birds will clean up quickly. He is strongly opposed to the practice of having uneaten grain lie about the pen. He uses V-shaped, covered metal troughs as feed hoppers, since old Show Homers with more or less coarse wattles and eye-ceres cannot readily pick grains from a flat feeding surface.

#### STRASSER

A PIGEON combining in generous measure beauty and productiveness is the Austrian Strasser. It is named after the

*Strauss* (ostrich) and bred extensively in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany, where it is considered a utility pigeon of the first order. In all probability, the Strasser is a cross of the Florentine and the European field pigeon. It has been established in Austria for more than a century and was first shown in Germany about 1890 by the eminent Schachtzabel. In the latter country it has become so popular that today it ranks top-favorite with thousands of enthusiastic fanciers.

The Strasser is a tightly feathered, blocky bird with deep, wide breast, smooth, gently curved head, short neck, orange-red eyes, medium-long wings carried well up on the body, short, straight tail, and red legs free from feathers below the knees. The solid color of the head runs one and a-half inches or two inches below the beak in front of the neck. The back, wings, and tail are also solidly colored. There should be no white feathers in the colored portions and no colored feathers in the white portions of the plumage.

This variety is bred in blue, blue-barred or barless, and blue checker; also in black, red, yellow, yellow-barred, and other colors. The finest specimens are usually the blues. They should have no colored hocks, though few birds are entirely free of them. The flights in blues and blue-checkers should be dark, the tail barred. Popular are also the black Strassers, which should not be slaty, but jet black with a green sheen. Serious faults in Strassers are bull or two-color eyes; dark beak in red or in yellow specimens; white flights; colored belly; all-white back; feathered feet.

All in all, the Strasser combines beauty of plumage with gracefulness of carriage. A lively bird of good size, it has proved to be a very steady producer of readily marketable, light-skinned squabs.

In America, the Strasser Club has of late years put forth strenuous efforts to place this breed in the forefront. Contrary to German authorities, most American breeders regard the Strasser as a color, not as a form pigeon. I am informed in this connection that the new American Strasser standard allows only ten points for color. By crossing birds imported from Europe with Hungarians and also with Kings, these fanciers hope ultimately to breed a Strasser weighing at maturity between twenty-two and twenty-four ounces, a bird which as

producer of sizeable squabs will successfully compete with the King and the Carneau.\*

Many of the Strassers which one sees at the shows today still reveal the recent mixture of bloods. They are heavy crosses with Strasser markings, which lack the graceful and alert carriage without which there can be no Strasser. It is hoped that the American Strasser of the future will be no less handsome and shapely than its noble ancestor, the Austrian Strasser.

### TIPPLER

A TRULY exciting pigeon sport is furnished by the Tippler, which is simply a long-flying tumbler. This breed was originated by crossing the Cumulet, a high-flying pigeon, with a tumbler of the Almond-bred "Kite" variety. The first Tipplers were shown in the United States in 1885. Five years later the first Tippler Club was formed, which soon formulated and adopted a standard. Ever since, the Tippler has been popular in this country.

There are Show Tipplers and Flying Tipplers. The ideal representative of either kind should be a medium-sized bird with a broad chest, strong wing-buts, and a body tapering to the tip of the tail. Its head should be round but not as full as that of the tumbler, with a medium face, black beak, pearl eye, and neat, dark ceres. The neck, short and thick at the shoulders, should taper well toward the head. The flight feathers should be short, broad, and overlap one another well. The legs should also be short, free from feathers below the hocks; the feet, small and bright red. There should be twelve feathers in the tail.

Mr. Arthur W. DeClute of Canada, one of the foremost fanciers of Flying Tipplers, emphasizes the following advantages of breeding this variety:

"Being a small bird, the Tippler eats very little and is therefore giving its owner no worry over feed costs. In fact, as little as two eggcupfuls of feed per day for each bird is plenty. Sometimes, during training, Tipplers exist on an even smaller amount of feed. Despite its small size, the Tippler is a very hardy species and reproduces very easily. One never has any

\* Official weight for Strassers is 28 and 26 ounces for old, and 26 and 24 ounces for young, birds, male and female, respectively.

trouble in raising young Tiplers since this breed makes excellent parents and feeders. Indeed, we find the Tiplers used to a great extent as foster parents by breeders of fancy pigeons. Since this breed reproduces so easily, a beginner does not need to have a large stock to start with, but can make an auspicious beginning with only a few pairs.

"From the sportsman's angle, the Tippler is ideal since it gives the thrill of competition and yet can be watched during the entire performance. With proper care and training these small pigeons can be taught to stay in the air for many hours. In some localities there are Tippler Clubs with organized competition, but the Flying Tippler fancier can always compete against time and can endeavour to break the existing records. Most of the records for Tippler Flying during the past twenty years have been made in Toronto, Canada, the present record for old birds being seventeen hours and ten minutes! The record for young birds is fifteen hours and fifty-five minutes. In England, where there is longer daylight, Tiplers have been flown for nineteen hours!

"The Flying Tippler is a very game bird. It will exhaust itself in an effort to do what is wanted of it—fly until called down by droppers. It has also a strong homing instinct: birds have been known to fly themselves to death in their efforts to reach home. A personal experience bears this statement out: I had been training six youngsters, approximately two months old, and had them well 'stayed,' but released them too late one evening, and they would not come for the droppers at dark. After six days one bird came home to the loft and was so utterly exhausted that it died shortly after its arrival. Eight days later another bird returned. And while it lived, it was worn out and had to be treated for many days. The thrill of watching a kit of Flying Tiplers after being in the air for eight, ten, or twelve hours, without showing any signs of quitting, is a real one. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that much genuine pleasure and entertainment as well as knowledge are to be had from breeding, training, and flying Tiplers, with the added attraction of the show pen.

"In training a kit of young Tiplers, the first step is to separate them from all other birds. As soon as the youngsters are able to eat, put them in a separate compartment or fly-coop, from which the babies can view their surroundings. Allow



your birds to sit out in this pen each day for approximately a week. Then give them daily outings on top of the loft at a time when you can stay to observe them. Gain the confidence of your birds at this time by handling them in a kind way. It will be easier to secure obedience from your kit if its members have been taught to know you.

"It is while the youngsters are allowed to sit on the roof of the loft that they are taught how to go in and out of the coop. To make them obedient, it is well to have them hungry. A few white Fantails, which later can serve as droppers, make good teachers; and if they are also kept hungry, they will soon show the young Tipplers the way in and out of the loft. Keep the Fantails in the fly-coop with your kit during the entire period of training.

"Should any member of your kit fly into the air, try to bring the bird down immediately by throwing a Fantail, which you should have handy at all times, and by attracting its attention with the other birds in your open pen. Never chase the birds or force them to fly during the first two weeks. Be patient and give your kit time to learn. There will be many opportunities later on to force them through that extra hour of flying."

## TRUMPETER

*Russian Trumpeter, German Trumpeter, English Trumpeter*

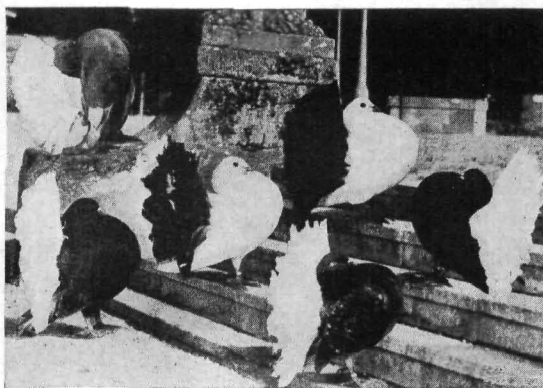
IN THE Trumpeter we have a curious variety of pigeon, distinguished by the peculiar sound of its voice. The Germans call it the drummer and the English and Americans the trumpeter.

Originally the Trumpeter came from Bokhara in central Asia, by way of Russia, where it is still extensively bred, which probably accounts for the fact that it was named *Russian Trumpeter*. The only other variety at all popular in America is the *German (Altenburg) Trumpeter*, usually misnamed English Trumpeter, and far superior to the other in its ability to trumpet continually and melodiously. As a matter of fact, as well-known German authority as Alfred Beeck maintains that there is no Russian Trumpeter today, it having many, many years since been so much improved as to justify the change of name from Russian to German Trumpeter, by which latter name it is known in Germany. That country has been,



**171 EXHIBITION HOMER**

Winner of many cups and trophies. Owned by Mr. R. G. Tomley, Kibworth, England. Photo, Musto, Leytonstone.

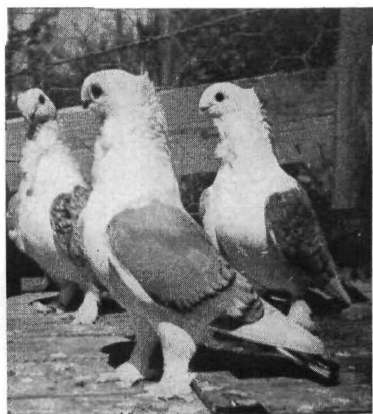


**172 A UNIQUE GROUP OF TAIL-MARKED FANTAILS**

Photo by Rudolf Zacharias, Regensburg.

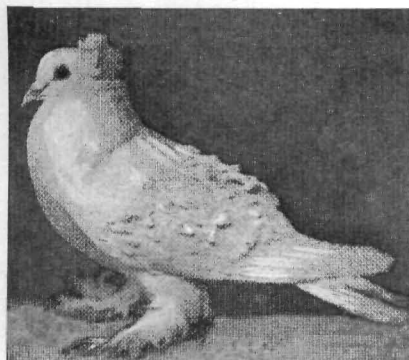


**173 1943 SCANDAROON, not quite fully developed. Bred by Geo. Neuberger, No. Hollywood, Cal.**



**174 ORIENTAL FRILLS**

Bred, as well as photographed, by Mr. B. Pawlik, Hondo, Texas.



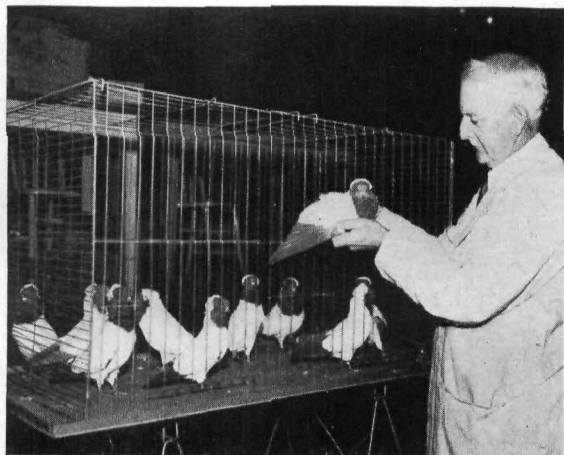
**175 PTARMIGAN COCK "PEMBROKE CHIEF"**

Winner of 1st Crystal Palace, 1936. Property of Mrs. Wightwick, Pembroke House, Torquay. Reproduced from 1938 New Year Number of "Pigeons and Pigeon World." The Ptarmigan is a rare English variety.

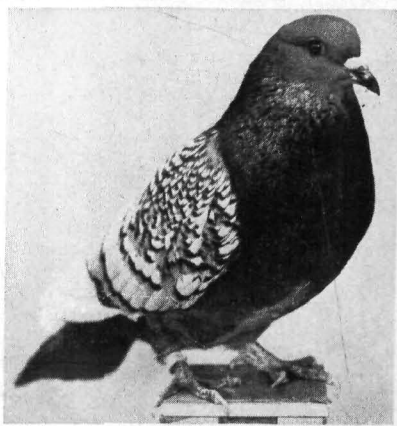


176 PVT. JACK E. GRAY (*Fan-tail fancier*) AND MR. JOE KOEHLER, *Club Secretary and Tumbler fancier*, are looking over the exhibits.

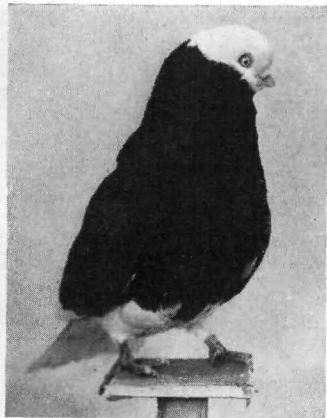
177 JAMES AIRD OF BEACON, N. Y., *Judging for the United Nun Club National Meet.* Mr. Aird has bred Nuns for more than fifty years.



178 BEARD TUMBLER  
*Young Cock. Best of Breed. Exhibitor: Mr. John S. Tidwell of Wichita, Kans*

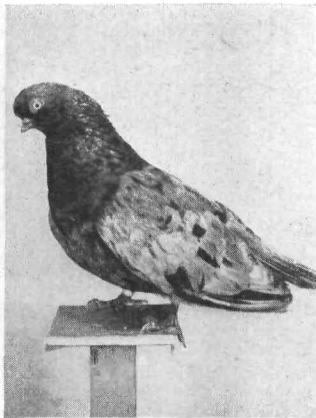


179 POLISH (SPANGLED) LYNX  
*Old Cock. Best of breed. Exhibitor: Mr. Walter Krawiec of Chicago, Ill*



**180 BALD-HEAD TUMBLER. OLD COCK. GRAND CHAMPION**

*Exhibitor: Mr. Henry De Quaker of Chicago, Ill.*



**181 ALMOND, SHORT-FACED CLEAN-LEG TUMBLER. OLD COCK**

*Best of breed. Exhibitor: Mr. Joe Hirschmugl of Chicago, Ill.*



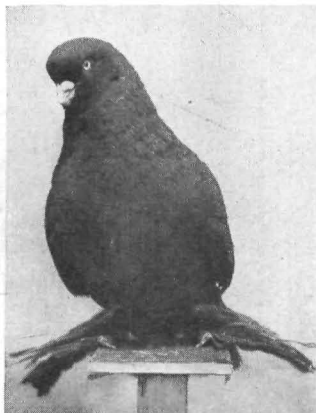
**182 OLD BLACK NUN COCK. GRAND CHAMPION, exhibitor: Mr. Lewis W. Bell of Oak Park, Ill.**



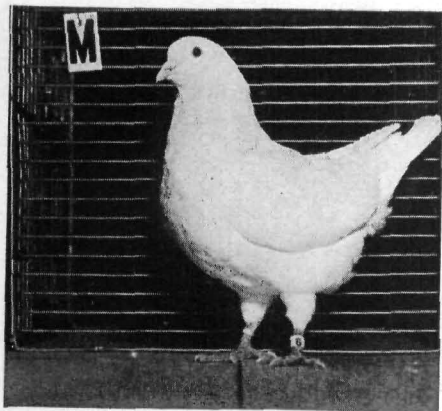
**183 JACOBIN. A.O.C. OLD COCK. FIRST PRIZE WINNER, exhibitor: Mr. Charles Baker of Springfield, Ill.**



**184 ENGLISH TRUM-PETER. YOUNG HEN, first place and best of breed. Exhibitor: Mr. Paul J. Stefanson of Berwyn, Ill.**



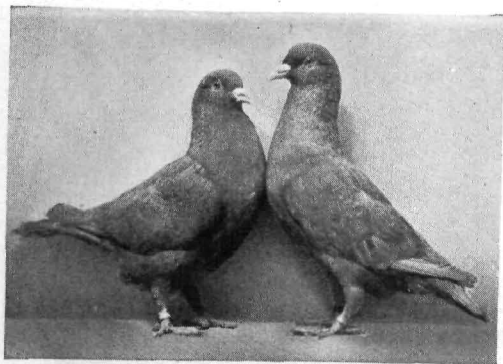
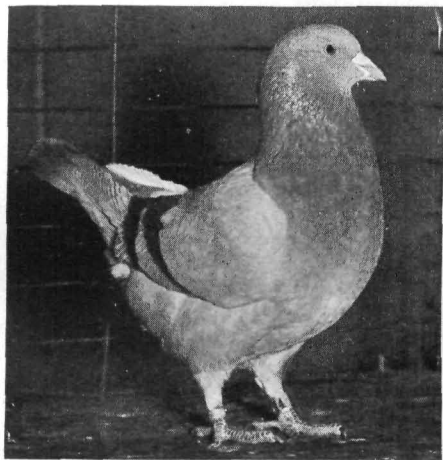
**185 GRAND CHAMPION YELLOW MUFF TUMBLER**  
*Old hen. Exhibitor: Mr. Edward Eklund of Bensonville, Ill.*



**186 THE WHITE KING**

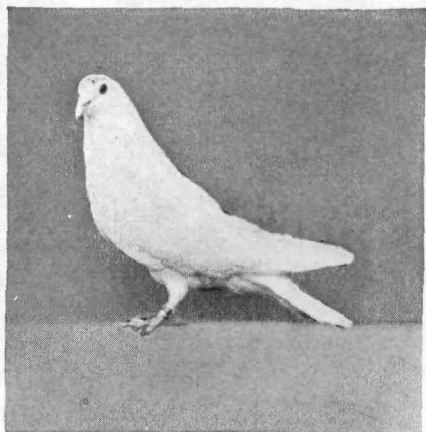
*Is a utility pigeon par excellence.  
Here is a champion from the loft of  
Mr. S. M. Wise of Stamford, Conn.*

**187** *There are both pleasure and profit  
in breeding fine SILVER KINGS.  
This Grand Champion was bred by  
Mr. Harry F. Allen of Norwood, Mass.*



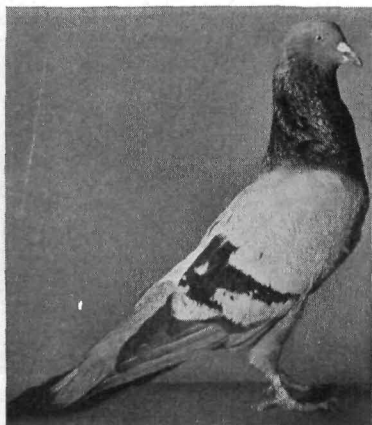
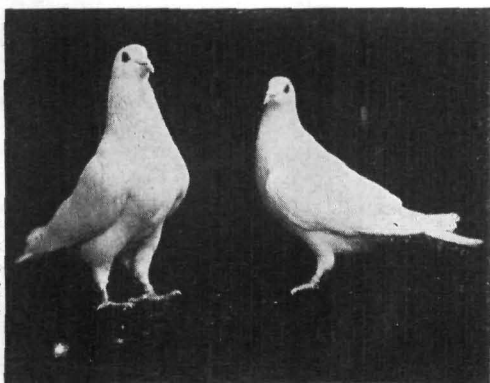
**188 CARNEAUX**

*are dependable producers of  
fine-meated squabs. These two  
yellow beauties have won many  
prizes for their owner, Mr. John  
L. Hall, Dallas, Tex.*

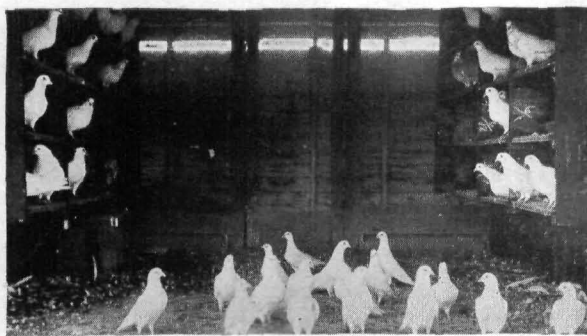


**189** *The SWISS MONDAINE is one of the most graceful utility pigeons bred. This bird is a prize-winner from the loft of Mr. Walter A. Hoenes, Cologne, N. J.*

**190** *A stocky, handsome pair of broad-breasted WHITE CARNEAUX from the Palmetto Pigeon Plant at Sumter, S. C., which has developed an outstanding strain of these untiring squab producers.*

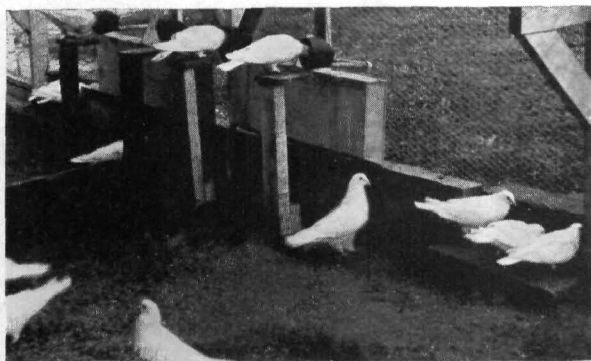


**191** *No domesticated pigeon produces larger squabs than does the RUNT. This BLUE RUNT male, a great winner at the Classic Shows in England, was bred by Mr. J. L. Sears, Coxland, Ewhurst, Surrey, England.*



**192** INTERIOR VIEW OF  
PEN OF WHITE CAR-  
NEAUX

*At the Palmetto Pigeon  
Plant, Sumter, S. C.*

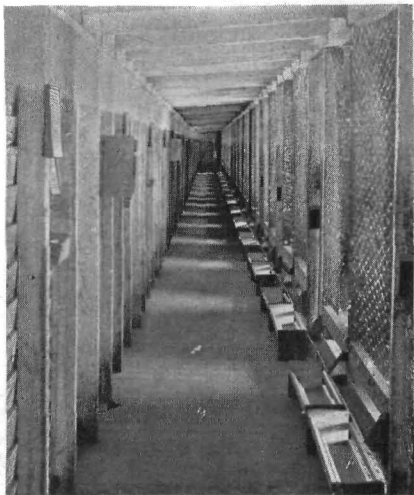


**193** THREE BIRDS DRINKING

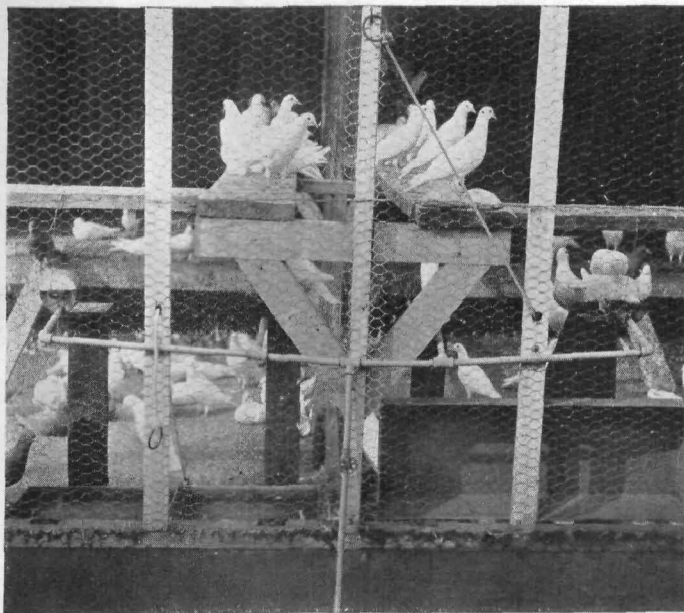
*Cups have tops to keep the water clean. At lower right, note birds feeding from grit hopper. Door of pen is constructed with woodwork running lengthwise to prevent warping and to keep out sparrows, which would otherwise enter through warped places. Note clean, gravel floor. Thorough cleanliness is of great importance in caring for pigeons. Palmetto Pigeon Plant, Sumter, S. C.*

**194** REAR AISLE OF PIGEON HOUSE

*at Palmetto Pigeon Plant, Sumter, S. C. Sanitation is the keynote here. Sunshine floods clear through the house. Each pen has a double-feeder system, enabling twice as many birds to eat at one time on the single trays. Pad and pencil on the rear wall are for making notes in day-time. Such memoranda are attended to at night, when the birds are quiet. Just beyond the pad is the squab record card. Under it is a small box containing a can of sodium fluoride for dusting for vermin, and sometimes infertile eggs and various small articles. Farther down are the auxiliary pigeon holding boxes, in which birds may be placed temporarily. All floors are solid, with the studding set on top of them to prevent rats from entering.*







# **195 A SECTION OF TWO YOUNGSTER PENS**

*At Palmetto Pigeon Plant, Sumter, S. C.*

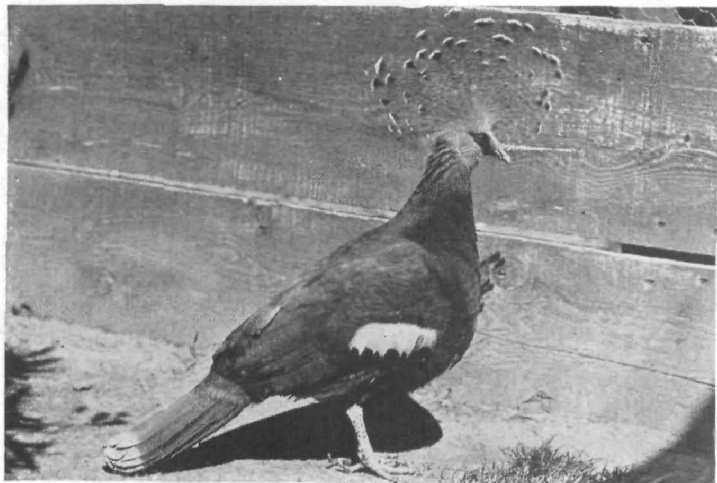
*Specially thick lighting perches are purposely used to prevent warping or sagging. Another practical feature is the clearance of the perches from the wire. At least eight inches must be given so that the birds may play and mate without interference from the wire-netting. The running water system used provides for downward-slanting pipes, so that in cold weather the water may be cut off and drained to prevent freezing. Observe capacious bath-pans. One is on the ground, filled with water; the other is pulled up for demonstration purposes. The cement foundation has heart-cypress lumber on top to prevent rapid deterioration, with water soaking it all day. Temporary running boards enable those youngsters which are unable to fly to walk into the house.*

# **196 SQUABS PACKED FOR SHIPMENT**

*At Palmetto Pigeon Plant, Sumter, S. C.*



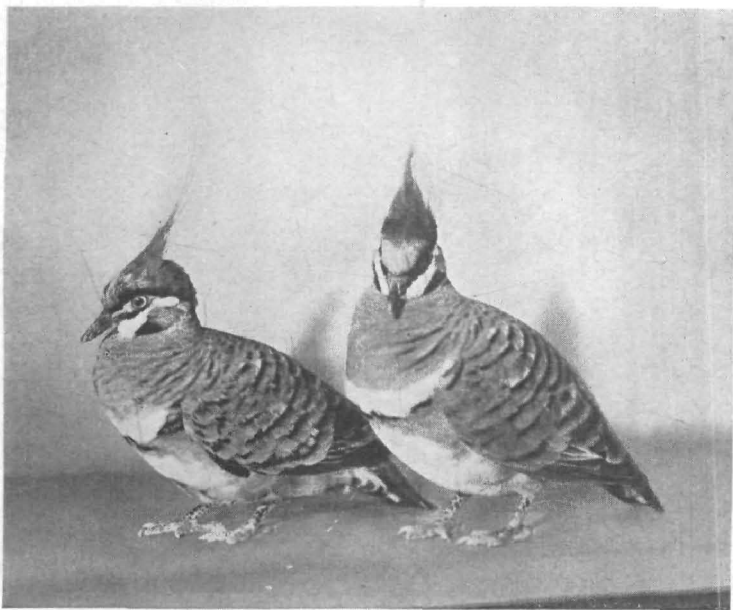




197 YES. IT'S A PIGEON!

*The largest of its kind—VICTORIA CROWNED PIGEON. It will breed in captivity.*

198 *A most attractive foreigner is the AUSTRALIAN PLUMED DOVE. This quaint bird lives largely on the ground. Many people mistake it for a quail.*



is today, and probably always will be the Trumpeter's homeland so to say; for in breeding this pigeon the German fanciers pay marked attention to the development of its voice, which is not true of American fanciers.

Essentially a squatty, close but soft-feathered bird, the Bokhara or Russian Trumpeter has a large body, short neck, well-developed shoulders, and long flights. Its crouching body stands on short legs, with the head carried rather low in order to show the perfectly round rose on top of it. Frequently, the Trumpeter gropes about from place to place, unable to see except in a downward direction, and is fond of retiring into corners where it drums to its mate.

The Trumpeter bred in England is a smaller and less squatty bird than the Russian. Moreover, its crested head has only a small "cup," similar to that of the Swallow or of the Priest. The foot-feathering is the same in both varieties.

In England and in America, the Trumpeter is bred mainly for its feather qualities. First of all, there is the rose, about the size of a half-dollar piece, which should be very compactly and firmly feathered. Moreover, it should radiate from the center of the skull and fall away gracefully over the beak and the sides of the head. The shell crest, standing erect, should be thick and deep, encompassing the back of the head from ear to ear.

The Trumpeter's boots—its foot and hock feathers—should be long, frequently attaining eight to ten inches, profuse, and evenly spread, with the outer feathers forming a semi-circle. Broken muffs or broken feathers on any portion of the pigeon's body are regarded as a serious defect.

White eyes are preferred in the Trumpeter. Comments Pruetz, well-known German authority: "The fine pearl eyes betray the noble race which exacts admiration from every fancier." The beak should be of light horn color in all specimens except the whites, in which it should be flesh-colored.

There are black and mottled as well as white and splashed Trumpeters. James C. Lyell, the English authority, tells of a Rev. T. B. C. Williams, who saw a pair of blood-red trumpeters of the highest quality in Paris, where owing to their rarity, a price of one hundred thirty pounds or approximately six hundred fifty dollars was asked for them.

Neither in England nor in America has the Trumpeter's

voice been developed to any marked extent, which is very regrettable, for the peculiar cooing is the most charming quality of this pigeon. For good and proper drumming, there are necessary, according to Neumeister and Pruetz, "a good beginning, a distinctly marked delivery, and an alternate rise and fall of the sound, trilling and sustaining." The more continuously the Trumpeter drums in approved style, the more valuable bird he is. Some males, with brief interruptions, have been known to trumpet for as long as ten minutes. Even when eating they will trumpet, there being no difference in the sound when the crop is full or empty. The hen, likewise, trumpets, though much more softly than the male, and less often. When the breeding season begins, many Trumpeter fanciers clip the rose, the foot feathers, as well as the long feathers around the vent to insure fertile and unbroken eggs.

The *Altenburg Trumpeter* has centuries ago been developed from a cross between the Russian Trumpeter and the Blue Rock pigeon. It is an especially fine drummer.

In appearance and shape it is very much like the variety described above, except that it is smaller, has a smooth head, and clean legs. The most popular colors of this variety are white and blue—with or without wing-bars, which are usually brown-black or gray-white in color.

In Germany one finds at least half a dozen different varieties of the Trumpeter, each differing from the other largely in color and markings. Thus, there are in addition to the *Altenburg Trumpeter*, the *Dresden*, the *Bernburg*, and many crosses of these.

Mr. Fred B. Thompson, a prominent Georgia breeder and judge, maintains that the Trumpeter "is one of the tamest and most docile pigeons, and that it is a wonderful feeder and breeder." To all of which I readily assent, for I bred a good many Trumpeters when I was a youngster.

## TUMBLERS

*Parlor, Short-faced, Long-faced, Muffed, and European Tumblers*

AN AERIAL clown and stunt flier of known accomplishment, the Performing Tumbler derives its name from its inclination to turn somersaults in flight. Most authorities agree that tum-

bling is a sort of aerial play enjoyed by the birds and not necessarily a mild form of epileptic fit. Occasionally some birds tumble so persistently that, losing control, they kill themselves crashing. Many young Tumblers practice dropping as soon as they know how to fly, which exercise many fanciers call "riding on the tail."

It is an extraordinary sight to watch a kit of high-flying Tumblers perform their antics, the while keeping pace with the other members of the kit. At times they soar so high into the heavens as to make it impossible for the observer to follow their movements. Tumblers are not usually given unlimited freedom to fly. Rather are they trained to fly together in groups known as kits, and to descend promptly when their keeper signals them—usually by placing a white Fantail pigeon on top of their loft or else by rattling the feed-can. Such excellent flyers are Tumblers that it is not at all uncommon for a kit to remain aloft three or four hours at a time.

According to the particular mode of somersaulting indulged in, Tumblers may be classified as High-flyers, which are mentioned in detail elsewhere; as House Tumblers, which perform their stunts while flying a short distance—so to say, from house to house; and as Inside or Parlor Tumblers, which, when thrown into the air or even when started from the ground, tumble once or twice before they land. Some Parlor Tumblers will roll fifty to seventy-five feet backward without stopping. At shows, Parlor Tumblers are usually judged according to the distance they can be made to tumble.

Recently Mr. Ray E. Gilbert, prominent Utah fancier of Parlor Tumblers, gave me the following informative account of his favorite breed of pigeons:

"About 1850 in or near Philadelphia, Pa., the Parlor Tumbler was originated from the Oriental and the Birmingham Rollers. Through judicious breeding three distinct types of Performing Parlor Tumbler have been produced: the single performing, which executes one backward somersault; the double-performing, which executes two backward somersaults; and the roller-performing, which executes a series of backward somersaults.

"To secure consistently smooth and accurate performances from the single or the double-performing Parlor Tumblers, they should preferably be placed on a plot of closely cropped lawn, not on hard ground, and be allowed to somersault of

their own accord, without undue urging by the handler. A slight clap of the hand or shuffle of the foot is ordinarily sufficient stimulation for the bird to somersault. The tumbler should rise from the ground no higher than is absolutely necessary to insure a clean-cut, flutterless 'turn,' and it should alight as near the starting point as possible, height and distance of alighting points depending on whether the bird is a single or double performer.

"A good roller-performing Parlor Tumbler should roll backward as straight and as far as possible in a tight, compact series of backward somersaults. This pigeon should be held in the hand, his feet being in the palm, his head pointing to the handler's shoulders, and his wings should be held tightly at the sides by the thumb and the small finger. Then the back of the hand should be touched quickly to the surface of the lawn and the bird be released with a smooth motion which will permit him to leave the hand and to touch the turf with unbroken rhythm. Since excessive drilling is detrimental to the Parlor Tumbler's physical well-being, it is advisable to exercise these pigeons regularly for short periods of time. This should be done without exciting the birds unduly and not on bare, hard ground.

"Since in recent years marked attention has been given to improving the color, type, and general appearance of Parlor Tumblers, they are today comparable in quality of color to the self-marked Show Tumblers. Encouraging progress has also been made in the breeding of the Almond variety.

"The Parlor Tumbler will respond to systematic care in breeding as readily as any other variety of pigeon, and will not require the aid of feeders. It is advisable to breed Parlor Tumblers in individual pens, which resemble in all respects modern rabbit hutches, each having preferably twelve square feet of floor space. Not more than two or three nestings a season are allowed each pair. The floors of these pens are best covered with fairly coarse sand. A piece of red (natural) rock-salt, which should be moistened occasionally, is placed in each pen as a conditioner for the birds and as a preventive against excessive growth of mandibles. Cut-down orange crates or dry-goods boxes lined with tobacco stems or other suitable nesting material, and provided with stepping aids for easy entrance, make very practical and inexpensive nesting com-

partments. The birds should not be disturbed during the nesting period.

"With reference to the cause of the various types of somersault performances, suffice it to say that man has artificially transferred this pigeon's innate response to fear from a condition in which it once took to flight to one in which it (now) responds by means of backward somersaults. It is doubtful if the ability to tumble can be explained as anything other than purely a conditioned response to fear. With a sudden simultaneous extension of the wings, a spreading and uplifting of the tail, a doubling or throwing back of the head, and an accompanying spring of the feet and legs, the bird makes the so-called turn or turns. Taken all in all, the Parlor Tumbler is, in my estimation, one of the most accomplished and lovable of all pigeons, and the one most likely to afford its owner many hours of genuine pleasure and relaxation."

An amusing tale concerning Parlor Tumblers is told by Mr. Fred B. Thompson, well-known Georgia breeder: "During my boyhood days I exhibited some pigeons at a show, the judge of which was a dear old Irishman who had a very keen sense of humor. An old southern darky came into the showroom—the show was held at one of our large fairs—and as he was looking at the pigeons, the judge asked him if he had ever seen trained pigeons. The old negro said 'no,' but added that he had seen some trained fleas in a tent on the midway and that he would sho like to see a trained pigeon."

"Purposely the judge elaborated much on the trained pigeon, telling his listener that there was a young man in the showroom who had spent many years training this particular pigeon. Soon I was called on to bring forth a Parlor Tumbler which I placed on a piece of cardboard atop a show coop. Immediately I snapped my fingers, telling the pigeon to do its stuff. At the movement of my hand, the bird made a motion to fly, turning three complete somersaults and alighting on its feet on the board. It took me the remainder of the afternoon to get rid of this old negro, for he followed me everywhere I went, begging me again and again to tell him just how I trained this pigeon. As he did not know, I never told him that it was the nature of the breed to turn these somersaults and not my master mind or training ability."

A great favorite has been for many years and is today the

*Short-faced Tumbler.* It is a small-bodied bird with a thin, well-arched neck, a full, wide and protruding chest, a short back, and drooping flights. Its distinguishing feature is a short, fine, and straight beak with a small, trim wattle. In breeding this variety, marked attention is paid to the shape of the skull or "knob." It should show a well-developed frontal, rising straightway from the beak as if overhanging it, and having a broad, circular crown. As with similar breeds, feeders are required to raise the young of the Short-faced Tumbler.

The Tumbler, with its short, compact body, makes a graceful and rather striking appearance, to which short legs with small yet strong feet contribute measurably. No matter how beautiful the color of the Tumbler, it is of little value unless it has the proper carriage. Tumblers are bred in various colors such as Almonds, Mottles, Agates (reds and yellows splashed heavily with white); Selfs (one color only); Kites (blacks with a bronze or reddish tint); and Baldheads and Beards. The distinguishing mark of the Baldhead is a white head, separated from the body by a sharp line running just below the eye; that of the Beard is a small white marking, semi-circular in shape, appearing immediately below the lower mandible.

Mr. P. F. Wannemacher, a prominent New York fancier of the long-faced Bald and Beard Tumbler, writes me that "both varieties are considered by many fanciers as being among the most attractive members of the Tumbler family, since they combine beautiful markings with the jaunty Tumbler characteristics so much admired by true lovers of pigeons.

"At present the Baldheads are the more popular. Both varieties are bred in black, red, yellow, blue, and mealy, with the duns, creams, and strawberries as the non-standard colors. Balds and Beards are very hardy, breed freely and true to type, and require no feeders. Good specimens are eagerly sought and competition at important shows is keen. These two varieties have now a club with annual meets held at three points—East, Middle West, and West. Numerous cups and trophies are offered at the club shows."

In breeding the *Long-Faced Tumbler*, which occurs both in clean-legged and in muffed forms, the aim today is to produce a bird, not with a fine beak and oval skull, as formerly, but with a stout beak, a large, round head that is full in front and

shows no hollowness between the eye and the beak, in which respect so many birds fail. The modern Long-Faced Tumbler has a blocky body, a short, thick, slightly arched neck, and short feathers. Its flight should be short, closely set, and be carried over a closely folded tail. Long-faced Tumblers are bred in black, red, yellow, white, balds and beards, and in other colors.

Favorites with many American fanciers are the *Muffed Tumblers*—they have long and well-spread foot feathers. Usually three classes appear at shows: *sells*, including blacks, blues, reds, yellows, whites, and silvers; *saddles*, including blacks or blues, reds or yellows, or any other standard combination; and *badges*, *mottles*, or *rosewings*. Except for their beard and whiskers, Saddles resemble Magpies. The beard is a white marking, running from the eye to the beak on each side and a short distance down the throat. The whiskers are a patch of color appearing on each side of the mouth. Except for white outer flights and face markings similar to those of Saddles, Badges are one-color pigeons.

#### EUROPEAN TUMBLERS

*German Long-faced Beard, Berlin Long-faced, Hanover Long-faced, Stipper, Tiger, Brander, Stralsund Highflyer, Danzig Highflyer, Stargard Swan-neck, Helmet, Vienna Tumbler, Cologne Tumbler, Komorner Tumbler*

THE NUMBER of European Tumbler varieties is so large that to describe each one would necessitate many times the number of pages allotted to this chapter. We shall content ourselves, therefore, with a brief mention of some of the more prominent varieties of Tumblers bred in Europe today. For ready recognition they may be divided into long-faced, medium-faced, and short-faced tumblers.

First among the long-faced varieties is the *German or Brunswick Long-faced Beard* (*Deutsches Weisschlag Bärtchen*). This is an old standby in the cities of Brunswick, Magdeburg, and Halberstadt. It is a slender, vivacious bird, the size of the common European field pigeon, with a smooth, long, and very small head which joins the neck at a sharp angle. Its forehead and beak, which should run in a horizontal line, give the bird



a racy appearance. The beak should be very long and very thin. The slender body of the bird should rest on long, clean, red legs. The long flights should be folded on the tail without crossing each other.

This variety occurs in practically all colors. It is recognizable first by the white beard, which should have a diameter of from eight to ten mm.; secondly, by the coloring of the flights, for each wing should have eight white primary flights. It is hardly needful to add that the German Long-Faced Beard is an excellent kit flyer.

The *Berlin Long-Faced Tumbler*, like most high-flyers, is valued not according to its markings, but its ability to fly. In general size, shape, and carriage it resembles the German Long-Faced Tumbler. It occurs in many different colors, and is bred in both clean-legged and muffed varieties.

In size, coloring, form, and carriage, the *Hanover Long-Faced Tumbler* (*Hanover Weissschlag Tümmeler*) is like the Brunswick, except that it has a higher forehead and a somewhat broader beak. It is used almost exclusively for solo flying.

Of *Danish Tumblers*, built like the German Beards except for slightly shorter legs, three closely related varieties are popular—the *Stipper*, the *Tiger*, and the *Brander*. All of them are like the German Long-Faced Tumbler, except for their markings.

The *Stipper* occurs in silver, gold, and copper. The Silver *Stipper*'s ground color is silvery white. Its whole body is covered with numerous small black spots. The richer the silver and the black, the more beautiful is the bird. The ground color of the Gold *Stipper* is a light yellow or light red, the spots being grayish-black or brownish-black; that of the Copper *Stipper* has bluish-gray or very dark brown spots on a ground color of deep yellow or reddish brown. The *Stipper*'s legs are lightly feathered, leaving the tips of the toes bare.

The *Tiger* has large (tiger) spots, which usually appear only after the moult, the youngsters being single or whole colored. Its wings and tail are colored. Its head has a bib. The *Brander* or *Fire Pigeon* is a rich chestnut brown. Its tail and wing feathers are edged black.

Danish Tumblers occur also in magpie colors, as blacks, browns, reds, yellows, blues, and silvers. They are also called *Danish Magpies* or *Copenhagen Tumblers*.

The *Stralsund Highflyer*, bred from the Holland Tumbler which is now extinct, occurs only in white. It has a very long, straight, white beak, a slightly rising forehead, and large pearl eyes with red ceres. This pigeon carries its wings rather loosely. In breeding it, especially desirable points to be considered are: a long, narrow neck, long legs, large eyes, and a sharp-cornered head.

The *Danzig Highflyer* is a short-legged pigeon with long wings and a broad crest. Its shoveltail consists of from twelve to seventeen feathers. It occurs in many different colors. Its value, however, does not lie in the markings but in the bird's flying ability. As a duration and altitude flyer, the Danzig Highflyer has no equal.

The *Stargard Swan-neck* (*Stargarder Schwanen- or Zitterhals*) has a long, sharply curved neck like a swan. It is one of the oldest German pigeon breeds, having been known in 1700 in Stargard, Pommerania. Its exact origin is not known. Some German authorities maintain that the Swan-neck is a cross between a fantail and a tumbler; others, that its ancestors were brought to Germany from far-off India, where several varieties of very long-necked pigeons are bred. Oddly enough, one of the Stargard Swan-neck's greatest faults is considered a trembling neck motion somewhat similar to that of the Fantail. Instead, there should be a strong bobbing motion of the neck, not only back and forth, but sidewise, which appears to be the all-important property which first-class specimens of this queer-looking breed must have.

The Swan-neck is bred in both, clean-legged and heavily muffed forms, and in many colors, such as white, black, blue, yellow, red, and dun. It is a very racy and active bird, used extensively for high-flying. After it has risen high into the sky with the kit, it engages in solo stunts of various sorts.

The *Medium-Faced Tumblers* are characterized by a more compact body, a shorter, rounder head, and short legs, in addition, of course, to the shorter beak. Here may be mentioned first of all the *Helmet* or *Calotte*, a white bird with colored head and tail, either smooth-headed or crested. To the same group belongs the *Vienna Tumbler*, which in addition to being a form and color pigeon, is also a capable high-flyer. It has an angular head, a very straight, medium-long beak, a fine pearl eye, and a well-developed breast.

A medium-faced tumbler of great beauty is the *Cologne Tumbler*. An excellent kit performer, this pigeon has years ago been much improved through crossing with white homers. It is a very compact bird with broad forehead, typical tumbler eye, and heavy plumage. The Cologne Tumbler is bred in both, clean-legged and heavily-muffed forms. The most attractive specimens are snow-white, though blacks with white tails, flights, and muffs are also popular.

A natural acrobat of the air is the *Komorner Tumbler*, a stout, short bird colored like a magpie and bred in Germany. It has a beautiful white head surrounded by a black, feathery hood of great width and height. The breast is colored almost to the legs. This strikingly marked pigeon occurs in black, blue, silver, red, yellow, and dun. The blacks and reds are considered the most desirable since they show the colors and hoods to best advantage.

Even though the Komorner Tumbler is largely bred for color and hood design, it still retains much of its original flying ability. Given the proper training, this pigeon will readily turn five or more somersaults while flying.

This breed is being popularized in America by Mr. August Stueckl, a Chicago fancier of long experience.

Other medium-faced European tumblers are the *Hamburg*, the *Polish*, and the *German*. Medium-faced, most of them differing only in coloring and other, more or less minor, respects.

To the short-faced European tumblers belong the *Berlin Ancient*, the *Short-Faced Vienna*, the *Short-faced Hungarian*, and many others.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *For Pelf and Palate*

**E**VEN THOUGH THE CHIEF PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK IS TO STIMULATE wider interest in pigeons as a hobby, the subject of profitable squab production is far too important to be omitted. Many a man finds it much easier to convince himself and his family of the worthwhileness of the pigeon hobby if in addition to pleasure and relaxation it yields some concrete return in the form of squabs fit for any table. And there is many a lover of fancy pigeons who keeps also a pen of utility pigeons, which supply squabs sufficient for the needs of his household. Finally, there is the man who relies on squabbing pigeons to make a living or even a comfortable income. It is this man whose work and probable success I want to discuss briefly.

Unlike the poultry industry—I use the word “industry” to denote production of marketable units of like quality and weight—the squab industry, still in its infancy, lacks organization. In the business of raising squabs it is every man for himself from start to finish. To be sure, there have been organized from time to time associations to aid the producer in the raising, shipping, and selling of squabs of a uniformly high quality, but their status has never been sufficiently well established financially to merit the confidence of the majority of squab men, so that their usefulness, limited as it was from the very beginning, has always been short-lived. Their main aims have been to induce the producer to ship a light-skinned squab of more or less uniform size and quality, to set and to maintain a fair price for squabs by providing storage for the surplus during the summer months when people eat little meat and by adopting aggressive methods of advertising and sales promotion.

The reason why so many squab men fail lies not in their inability to produce a marketable squab at a cost likely to leave them a fair return, but in their failure to establish and main-

tain month after month a profitable retail outlet for their product. Of course, if the squab plant is located within a day's shipping distance of a large city, there are usually commission merchants willing to handle regular shipments of squabs which meet their particular needs. I recall a California squab producer who once shipped an entire carload of squabs to an Eastern market—a rare occurrence. Whatever the net profit on this shipment may have been, the venture proved to be excellent advertising for the shipper.

Undoubtedly the most profitable market for squabs is provided by the consumer, for the obvious reason that he pays the producer a price much higher than that which any commission merchant or other middleman can afford to pay. Of course, the well-known difficulty is to establish a consumer market which each month will buy and pay promptly for the major portion of the producer's squab output. It is easy to raise squabs, but far from easy to sell them profitably, especially when they are being raised in large quantities. Too many a squab man is unwilling to solicit orders personally by calling again and again on possible consumers in his neighborhood with a view to induce them to give him a trial order. And yet it is in exactly this way that many an alert and industrious squab man has built up a lucrative and permanent market. There is in most towns and cities a potential demand for squab meat, but before it can be made to yield good and steady returns this demand must be made actual and stimulated in businesslike fashion. Squab-raising offers no get-rich-quick opportunities. To be at all successful in it, one must operate one's plant like any other legitimate business—with common sense and with full knowledge of its most pressing problems. Most assuredly, the squab business is not a business for people who have failed repeatedly in other fields of human endeavor.

The squab plants which realize their owners a fair profit on every squab produced are those operated on the most progressive and efficient business principles. And even for them it is often difficult to meet prices lowered by periods of depression or flooded markets, for it must be remembered that to many people squab meat is still somewhat of a luxury, the price of which they can hardly afford to pay very often, especially in times of financial stringency. Pertinent to this matter are the remarks recently made by the owner of one of Amer-

ica's largest and most efficient squab plants: "Our plant grew nicely until 1930, at which time we had over 10,000 breeders. Since then, however, we have had to work twice as hard as before to stay out of the red, and within recent years many fairly large squab plants have quit. It should be remembered that our government has helped the cotton, corn, wheat, hog, cow, and tobacco producer, but never the squab producer."

I have observed at close range the establishment and management of squab plants which keep between 500 and 800 pairs of breeders. Their owners appear to make a good living at the business, largely because they started in a modest way with ample capital, devoting a great deal of aggressive and intelligent effort to the development and maintenance of a consumer market.

Undoubtedly the most important financial item on the squab man's list, in addition to capital investment, land, equipment, and breeding stock is the cost of grain. If he can buy quality peas, yellow corn, wheat, and kaffir corn fairly cheap and in large quantities, without having to pay high transportation expenses on it, then one of his most pressing problems will be solved, since feed is the raw material so to speak out of which squabs are manufactured. This raw material he must purchase at the lowest possible figure to insure minimum production costs. Thus, so far as squab production costs are concerned, there is a vast difference in buying feed by the sack and by the carload.

Furthermore, the squab plant must be operated and managed with the least possible overhead expense and yet turn out a quality product in record time. To accomplish such a result presupposes a thorough knowledge of pigeons and their habits, especially with reference to the total annual productivity of certain breeds and certain strains. Accurate records must be kept of each pair of breeders so that those which fall repeatedly below the set standard of production may be culled before they have had time to eat up considerable profits. Rigorous and constant culling is the rule with successful squab men. When a pair of birds fails to produce adequately over a given period of time, it is either split up and re-mated, or else discarded. Since increasing age slows breeders up appreciably, their keeper must band all his stock so as to be able to tell the age of each bird readily at any time. Some breeds and

strains produce well for three, others for four, five and six years.

Moreover, the birds must be kept in good health. Their owner must know how to keep them free from disease and how to care for them satisfactorily, but yet with the least expenditure of time, effort, and money. In a commercial squab plant each important function is performed in the quickest and most practicable way. In feeding thousands of birds at a certain California plant, a man passes quickly between the long aisles of pens and throws the grain over the wire-tops and onto the floors of the pens, where the hungry birds pick it up without delay. If he had to step into each pen separately, the whole operation of feeding would require at least twice the amount of time and cost allotted to it under the present arrangement. Furthermore, cleaning of nests and pens is done only two or three times a year in large plants. Most of this essential knowledge the squab man can gain only from extensive experience. The fine points of profitable squab raising can no more be learned in a few months' time than can those of any other important and legitimate business.

Finally, the squab man must know how to distribute his product profitably. As already stressed, many squab producers are flabby salesmen. Too often they prefer to take the way of least resistance and ship their output to commission men, thus depriving themselves of the highest return on their time and efforts. Only by cultivating a retail market within a distance of five hundred miles of his plant can the squab man hope to realize a good profit from his business. At four weeks of age, squabs may retail anywhere from 25¢ to \$1 apiece, depending on their size and general quality, the competition in the field, the prevailing demand and season of the year, and on general business conditions. The average profit yielded by a pair of squabbing pigeons under favorable conditions is approximately two dollars a year. Hence to earn a thousand dollars net a year would require over five hundred pairs of good breeders, allowing for unforeseen losses through sickness, death, and many other causes. It is doubtful whether a man and his wife, selling both live and dressed squabs, can take proper care of more than 700 pairs of breeders without hiring additional help. Of course, some well-established squab plants

with fine strains of birds add to their annual income by selling breeding stock at profitable prices. However, few squab men can count on a regular income from this source.

If, after careful consideration of the various conditions outlined above, you still feel like going into the squab business, be careful above all else to purchase the very best foundation stock you can afford. Buy only from a well-known breeder who himself is a thoroughly experienced, and so far as you know successful, squab man. Either youngsters or mated pairs of a prolific and fast-producing strain will be the best. Ordinarily the strain is more important than the breed. Avoid bargains in old birds. They may look well, but in reality they may be worn out. One or two-year old birds may cost you twice as much per pair as four or five-year old birds, but they are usually worth the difference because their period of highest productivity is still ahead of them. There is no profit for you in old birds. Under no condition buy pigeons which are not seamless banded, no matter what their owner may tell you about their age and breeding proclivities. The seamless legband stating the year of birth is your only reliable guarantee of the bird's age.

So far as the particular variety of pigeons with which you start is concerned, that is usually not so important as the strain. A good strain is one that will produce good squabs in abundance. Most commonly in demand as squabbing pigeons are Kings, Carneaux, Mondaines, Giant Homers, and sometimes Hungarians, Maltese, Strassers, and Runts. The Dyer & Davis plant in New Jersey keeps approximately 20,000 squabbing Homers; that of George W. Middleton & Sons in Pennsylvania, approximately 12,000 White and Silver Kings; that of C. R. King in California approximately 4,000 Kings; and the Palmetto Pigeon Plant in South Carolina, 12,000 Carneaux, mostly white.

Once you have studied carefully the requirements of your customers so far as size of squabs is concerned and once you have worked with certain varieties of pigeons for a number of months, you will know better which suit your particular needs. All of the producers mentioned above seem to be entirely satisfied with the birds they are raising whether they be Homers, Kings, or Carneaux. Mr. Wendell M. Levi, president of the



Palmetto Pigeon Plant, writes: "Certainly we would not, if we had the opportunity, exchange our White Carneaux for any other birds we have ever seen."

It is only through constant and critical study of the conditions affecting your particular squab business that you can hope to succeed eventually, for remember, in addition to being a good pigeon manager, you must be an accurate bookkeeper and, most essential of all, an aggressive and alert salesman. Raising squabs on a commercial scale is a serious business, requiring business common sense of the highest order.

In concluding this chapter, a few practical remarks on preparing squabs for the market should prove helpful. Squabs which are to be killed are best gathered the day before killing, to make sure that their crops will be empty. Only those which are pretty well feathered under the wings should be taken. Their age at this time is between 25 and 30 days. The quickest way to kill a squab is to cut the jugular vein with a sharp, long-blade knife at the point where the upper palate fringes off at the back of the mouth. Beheading squabs unfits them for selling purposes, though this method of killing is frequently used for squabs intended for the producer's own table.

Where many squabs are killed at the same time, it is best to have a number of tin funnels handy into which the bleeding squabs are placed head down so that they cannot "flop." After they have bled for a few minutes and *before* they are thoroughly cool, they are ready to be picked. Squabs should always be *dry* picked, never scalded. In preparing them for the market, all feathers except those on the head are picked. Small feathers may be singed off over a gas burner. After each squab is plucked, it is placed in a tub of ice-cold water to which has been added a handful of table salt. This simple treatment tends to harden and whiten the flesh of the squab. After two or more hours of cooling, the squabs are placed in the refrigerator for chilling, or even slight freezing, before shipment. Crops containing grains are flushed clean with water; squabs with unclean crops are likely to spoil in transit. It is not accepted practice to clean crops by cutting them open.

For shipment, clean and odorless wooden boxes or barrels are most suitable. Punch a number of small holes in the bottom of the container, then line it with heavy paper. Place a three to four-inch layer of cracked ice in the bottom, on

which you then *stand* a layer of squabs on their heads. Do not pack them on their sides or backs, but always on their heads. It is a good plan to weigh the squabs before packing and to place only squabs of uniform size in each box. Place a layer of ice between each layer of squabs, and a heavy layer of ice on top of the shipment, which you should then cover well with heavy paper. Address the shipping box with waterproof crayon and provide it with a tag, giving the name and address of the shipper as well as the number of squabs shipped. Shipment is usually made by prepaid express on the basis of second-class rate and a reduction of 25% for ice. A small number of squabs, each neatly wrapped in tissue or oil paper, may be shipped in a heavy carton marked "Perishable!" by special delivery parcel post to insure immediate delivery on arrival.

Always the shipper should take extra precautions to insure that his squabs reach their destination in good condition. For it is a fact that the receipt of a shipment of clean, light-skinned squabs of uniform size neatly packed does much to promote further sales.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Commercial Breeds*

#### KINGS

**P**ERHAPS THE MOST POPULAR SQUAB OR UTILITY PIGEON TODAY is the King, especially the White King and the Silver King. Three qualities account for their growing popularity—size, beauty, and productiveness.

The King is a handsome pigeon, weighing between 26 and 30 ounces. If properly cared for, a mature pair of Kings will produce annually from seven to nine, and even ten, pairs of white-skinned squabs weighing one pound when dressed. Since pound rather than three-quarter pound or one-and-a-half pound squabs are the most sought after for serving by restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and private families, the King pigeon has been developed particularly to meet this wide general market demand for a fine-meated pound squab.

The *White King* was originated in the United States by crossing such breeds as the Swiss Mondaine, the white Duchess, the Florentine, and the Dragoon. The *Silver King*, now as a utility pigeon almost as popular as the White King, was produced about 1910 by C. R. King, well-known California pigeon man, by crossing Homers, Runts, Maltese, and Mondaines. Nine years later this variety was recognized as a standard breed. The Silver King got its prolificness from the Homer and the Mondaine, its size from the Mondaine, and the short, blocky breast from the Maltese. There is practically no difference in the weight or color of squabs produced by White and by Silver Kings of good strains. A squab breeder who for years has kept both breeds side by side tells me that he prefers Silvers to Whites because their squabs are easier to pick, there being no down on them after the feathers have been plucked, as is true of White King squabs.

Though the product of much crossing, the modern King shows great individuality owing to the fact that many able pigeon men took a fancy to this utility pigeon shortly after it became a standard breed. Quickly the enthusiasm for the King

spread from coast to coast, resulting in the organization of alert King clubs, whose members promptly made it their business to improve the old type King. There is no gainsaying the fact that the modern King pigeon is a much blockier and "typier" bird than were its numerous predecessors.

The King is a chunky, but graceful pigeon of medium length and size, with a fairly large head, a round skull, and a prominent forehead. To meet the specifications of the standard of perfection, this pigeon should have a strong, medium long beak with a small, smooth wattle. Its eye should be prominent and round, with a red cere. In White Kings the eye color should be brownish-black; in Silvers, pearl; in Yellow, Blue, and Red Kings, it should be orange. The blocky, deep, and well-rounded body of the King should stand alertly on a pair of straight, bright-red legs of medium length. Good type Kings have wide backs and broad, short tails. Their rather short wings rest, well folded, on the tail. Their plumage is tight, short, smooth, and firm. Serious defects are a narrow body and breast, long head and tail, and loose feathers.

It is a pleasure to breed the King because it is tame and prolific. Since this pigeon is quite large, it should always be given ample room to avoid crowding and needless fighting. It is not easy, however, to breed a King which will win in the show-room owing to the increasingly sharp competition which this variety must meet at practically all important shows. It is type, rather than color or size, which the alert King breeder strives for consistently. His aim is to produce a bird which, in addition to being an untiring producer of large, fine-meated squabs, has beauty of shape and evenness of color—a dual-purpose pigeon *par excellence*.

To my request to give me some pertinent details about the history of the King pigeons, Mr. C. R. King replied as follows:

About 1891, Harry Baker of New Jersey, an ardent pigeon fancier, conceived the idea of producing an all-purpose pigeon—one which would combine the qualities of both fancy and utility.

After numerous experiments, this man selected as his foundation for an all-white pigeon, the Duchess for grace and beauty, the Homer for fast breeding, the Maltese for breast and compactness, and the Runt for body and size. The product of crossing was a pure white bird, which after a year or two he called the "King of Pigeons," and finally the White King.

It was during 1909, when I resided in Los Angeles, that I conceived the idea of having Silver Kings as well as White Kings. Being then a breeder of Silver Runts, Silver Homers, Silver Maltese, and Silver Mondaines, I decided that I would take a quarter-blood of each breed and by blending them, produce a short, blocky silver colored pigeon—the Silver King.

At present in California, where more and larger squabs are raised than in any other state, there are more Silver and White Kings used for squab purposes than pigeons of any other breed.

The White King Club was formed in 1914. It held its first annual show in 1915 at St. Louis; its second in 1917 at Fort Worth. At its fifth annual show held in 1921 at Oakland, California, the Club changed its name to the American King Club, accepting at that time the Silver King as a standard-bred pigeon. At the 16th annual meet held in 1922 at Louisville, Kentucky, the American King Club voted to recognize Blue, Red, Yellow, and Dun as standard colors. At the present writing the Blue Kings are gaining favor rapidly as show birds, although we cannot as yet recommend them as squab pigeons since a certain percentage of their youngsters come dark-skinned.

## CARNEAUX

ANOTHER EXTREMELY popular table pigeon is the Carneau, which has long been bred in France because of its fine squab-producing capacity. In comparatively recent times, Belgium took up the breeding of Carneaux, developing heavier and stockier strains. Originally imported from Belgium and France, this pigeon has been greatly improved in this country through years of purposeful selection. Carneaux were first imported into the United States in 1910; the colors favored by the importers were red-splashes and yellow-splashes. Not very long after their importation, these pigeons were bred in solid red and solid yellow.

The first Carneau standard was published in 1910. Since then great strides have been made in the development of this prolific pigeon, especially in getting a larger bird with a broad breast and shorter wings and tail. Later, the White Carneau, a cross between a red-splashed or nearly white Carneau and the English Duchess pigeon, was produced. Finally, by crossing a white male with a red female, solid blacks were produced, and duns by crossing reds or yellows with blacks.

The Carneau is a short, cobby bird, weighing from 22 to 25

ounces. Like most utility pigeons, the Carneau should have a broad breast, because its squabs are valuable only in so far as they have plenty of meat on the breast. The head should not be slender, but prominent and round. The eye should be large and encircled by a smooth, well-proportioned cere. There should be a stout and rather short beak, having a fine-textured, smooth wattle. Wings and tail of the Carneau should be reasonably short, but longer in proportion than those of the King, to give the bird beauty. The wings should be carried tight against the body and over the tail feathers, their tips smoothly folded on the tail. The wing-butts should fold neatly against the breast without being very prominent. In every respect, the Carneaux should be close-feathered.

The Carneau is prized highly as a utility pigeon, because it is a dependable feeder and fast producer of light-skinned squabs weighing a pound or more. One finds pens of Carneaux at many commercial squab plants throughout the country. While red and yellow Carneaux are still the favorites, there have been developed in recent years some excellent producing strains of White Carneaux which are rapidly coming to the front in popularity.

For show purposes the color of the red Carneau should be a deep red-chestnut with a red under-color free from smut. The yellow Carneau should have a deep ground hue. Cinnamon colored birds are termed over-color. A first-class colored bird of inferior shape should never be appraised higher in the showroom than a well-shaped bird of inferior color, especially since color counts only 25% of the value of the whole bird. However, when birds of equally good shape are competing against one another, the color factor often assumes great importance.

## MONDAINES

ONE OF the most graceful utility pigeons is the White Swiss Mondaine, a rather long pigeon midway in size between the King and the Runt. Originally imported from France and from Switzerland in 1891 by Harry M. Samson, an eastern breeder, the Swiss Mondaine made itself a place readily in the hearts of American squab men, who like its gentleness, beauty, and breeding capacity. Today's Swiss Mondaine is a much im-

proved bird. The parent stock from which it was developed in this country is called the American Mondaine, which has now a separate standard of perfection.

The *Swiss Mondaine* throws fast-maturing squabs, weighing often from 1½ to 1¾ pounds, and more, apiece. As compared with the Kings, the Mondaines are said not to produce quite as fast, though this is frequently a matter of strains. In all other respects the Mondaine is fully the equal of the King.

The Mondaine of the past was a long, narrow, loose-feathered bird with shallow breast and narrow back—largely a cross between the white Runt and the white Duchess. Though today's Mondaine is a shorter bird with broad back and a fine, long breast, it may well be described as having a long body with a long neck with correspondingly long wings and tail. It is now being bred for greater weight, broader rump, and cleaner, i.e. unfeathered, legs.

Another variety of the Mondaine, popular as a squabbing pigeon in some parts of the country, is the *French Gros Mondain*, a cross of the Roman Runt, the Leghorn Runt, and the common *Italian Mondaine*. It is strictly a utility pigeon, bred for its large, deep, and broad body which makes it valuable as a squab producer, and which is shaped a good deal like that of the American King. The French Mondain is bred in all colors. Because it has been crossed in recent years so many times with Runts and other breeds, the French Mondain does not reproduce itself as well as do older and better established breeds.

There is still another Mondaine—the *Indian Mondain*, a compact bird of bold and upright carriage. The pigeon's tendency to stand very erect and to carry its head far back is inherited from one of its ancestors, the Indian Gola, which was bred and crossed for utility purposes with other varieties, particularly in 1883 by Captain John H. Morgan of the Indian army.

The Indian Mondain is said to be a somewhat faster worker than the French Mondain, which it almost equals in weight. Though the former produces large, fine squabs, it is not very popular at present since it fails frequently to produce youngsters true in color. In other words, it is not an established breed as yet. However, because the Indian Mondain is a two-

color pigeon, some fanciers find it more interesting to work with than the Swiss Mondaine. Perhaps the most attractive Indian Mondains are those whose plumage shows an evenly distributed black spangling on a ground color of rich yellow.

## RUNTS

THE RUNT is the largest domestic pigeon bred. It is very tame, strutting about on the ground like a chicken of the heavier breeds. It measures twenty-one to twenty-two inches from the tip of its beak to the end of its tail, and it weighs two and a half pounds.

Not only is the Runt a very large but also a very old breed. John Moore affirms that in 1735 certain English fanciers paid as much as £25, approximately \$125, for a pair of these giant pigeons which weighed nearly five pounds. The origin of the ugly name of this breed has never been satisfactorily explained. Of course, the name may have been applied ironically. James C. Lyell, the English authority, comments that "the name for pigeons so interbred that it is often impossible to guess at their ancestry was Runts, probably having the same meaning as when applied to common cattle, as Welsh Runts, though a canary hen of three years of age was also called a Runt."

There is perhaps no other breed of pigeons whose origin is so beclouded as is that of the Runt, generally acknowledged to have been crossed time and again with many different breeds. In Germany, the Runt, called the Roman pigeon, is assumed to be a cross between a German Pouter and some large Oriental pigeon. In France, the Runt is taken to be a descendant of the Italian "Campagna," i.e. field pigeon, famous because it was the largest pigeon bred.

Writing in 1883, V. La Perre de Roo, in his book, "Monographie des Pigeons Domestiques," has hardly a good word for the Runts. He maintains that they are very slow breeders, extremely quarrelsome among themselves, unable to fly any distance, that they eat twice as much as any other breed, and are known only for their size! Fortunately, the modern Runt is a much improved pigeon, bred as much for exhibition as for squabbling purposes.



Today's standard calls for long, wide, and deep bodies with wing and tail feathers of proportionate length. A graceful bird of pleasing lines is desired, the larger, the better, for there can be no Runt without great size.\* Since mere appearance of size is very deceiving, especially in a loose-feathered pigeon, size in the Runt should be judged by handling the bird. The Runt should have a large frame with good depth, width, and length, the two last mentioned qualities extending well toward the vent. The main requirement is that the Runt have a long frame, which gives it plenty of flesh, but a long frame is not necessarily betokened by long feathers.

Furthermore, the Runt should have a large, round, and broad head, suggesting strength and boldness. Its beak should be broad, of medium length, topped by a fine, small, oval wattle. The eye should be full and prominent—in white birds, dark hazel or bull; in colored specimens it should be pearl. The eye-cere should be bright red in white, red, and yellow birds; Damson color in blues and blacks; flesh-color in silvers and duns. The neck should be moderately long, thick, and free from gullet. The body, sometimes called "hog" back, should be long and broad; the top, oval from side to side. High shoulders or hollowness in the back are considered serious defects. A large, compact, close-feathered, long-bodied Runt with moderately long flights and tail is usually considered a better exhibition specimen than one with a long, narrow, loosely-feathered body and very long flights. The standard calls for wings to be well folded against the body, their tips resting on the tail. Runts are bred in white, blue or silver, yellow, red, black, and other colors.

While this giant among pigeons is not as fast a breeder as the King or the Carneau, the youngsters it produces compensate for this shortcoming by their greater weight, which is between three and four pounds the pair. Besides, it must be remembered that certain strains of Runts are much more prolific than others, so that it is up to the breeder to procure birds from a fast producing strain.

To insure success in breeding Runts, the birds should never be crowded. Many Runt fanciers place each pair in an indi-

\* At a recent national pigeon show, the largest Runt weighed three and a half pounds. It had a body circumference of eighteen inches and a wing-spread of three feet.

vidual pen seven feet long, six feet wide, and six feet high, where sufficient room and privacy insure good breeding results. The nest-box should be fifteen inches square. These pigeons should be given abundant nesting material lest they break their eggs, and plenty of grit so that they may shell their eggs well.

Mr. Deis R. Peters, well-known Ohio breeder of Giant Runts, has this to say regarding his favorite breed: "I personally love and admire Giant Runts because they are so gentle and tame and therefore very easy to handle. Why this largest of all domestic pigeons should have been given such an inappropriate name is very strange, to say the least, for it is anything but a runt. As you know, the modern Runt does not drag its wings and is really a very graceful and beautiful pigeon. At present the whites seem to be the most popular.

"If permitted to do so, a good strain of Runts will breed just as fast as any other breed of pigeons. I keep my Runts in the city where space is at a premium, using individual coops, six to a battery, in which they thrive since they do not need a fly-pen. The breeding of Runts is an interesting and profitable hobby, for there is almost always a good demand for Runt squabs. That interest in this giant pigeon is rapidly growing is shown by the fact that the membership of the Giant Runt Club of America during the past year has almost doubled."

## WORKING HOMERS

THIS SQUABBING pigeon is much like the Racing Homer, but larger in body and somewhat coarser in wattle and cere. In all probability, the Working Homer is merely a cast-off Racing Homer which, owing to its size and coarseness, the breeders could not class as a likely flyer.

Beginning in 1901, Mr. Elmer C. Rice, who conducts a national business in pigeons in Massachusetts, advertised the Homer, which up to the first world war he imported from Belgium, so extensively as an ideal squab producer and money-maker that it became quite popular. At that time there were comparatively few other breeds which could compete with the Working Homer in prolificness. Since then, the advent of larger and heavier squabbing pigeons, such as the King, Carneau, Mondaine, and others, has diminished the popularity of

the Working Homer decidedly; today it is largely unsuited to a market which demands much larger squabs than those which the Working Homer throws.

### GIANT HOMERS

BECAUSE OF its comparative recent origin, the Giant Homer, which is strictly a utility pigeon, is not as yet recorded in pigeon literature. It is an American breed developed from the racing and the working homers, whose fertility and stamina as a producer it inherits. Having these qualities in addition to large size, the Giant Homer is necessarily a good squab pigeon. Originators of this variety maintain that it breeds faster than the King, Carneau, and other, similar varieties.

Fully matured Giant Homers weigh from twenty-two to twenty-seven ounces apiece. Perhaps the chief obstacle in this pigeon's way to popularity as a utility breed of the first order is the fact that its squabs are sometimes dark-skinned and therefore not acceptable to the general market which demands white or yellow-skinned squabs. Once the Giant Homer can be relied on to produce only light-meated young, it will quickly rise in the favor of squabmen. Messrs. R. W. Keen of Kentucky and Wm. P. Gray of Connecticut have perhaps done more than anyone else to develop the Giant Homer to its present state of size and quality.

A special reason for the popularity of the Giant Homer lies in the fact that it may be bred in almost any color desired, since size and shape, not markings, are the important properties desired. As mentioned, the Giant Homer is noted especially for the rapidity with which it multiplies. A really good specimen of this breed may be found on a new setting of eggs every six or seven weeks except during the moulting season. Time will tell as to whether this breed has the necessary vitality to stand from three to five years of more or less uninterrupted and fast breeding in the squab plant, where slow producers are quickly spotted and culled.

Since writing the above comments I have again taken up the breeding of Giant Homers, keeping blue-bars, silvers, and duns. I have found this particular strain—from Wisconsin—to throw light-skinned squabs and to produce exceptionally good feeders and fast breeders.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Concerning Foreign Doves*

**H**EARTENED BY THE STEADILY GROWING INTEREST OF AMERICAN aviculturists in so-called foreign (wild) doves, (pigeons are merely the larger-sized doves) I shall discuss briefly some of the fundamental phases of keeping and breeding them. It has been my great delight to keep various species of foreign doves for a number of years, not with the thought that this phase of my pigeon hobby might yield monetary returns, though these would indeed be welcome, but solely for the purpose of studying and enjoying these handsome, though rather shy, birds to learn their habits and their various requirements in captivity. And though this hobby has been, and is, expensive, especially for one of moderate means, the hours I have given to observing and caring for my doves have been rich in educational and spiritual values. On my desk are avicultural periodicals from England, Germany, and America, each bringing enthusiastic and more or less authentic reports on breeding doves. Almost every week the postman hands me letters from fellow dove fanciers in this country and abroad who wish to exchange both doves and experiences.

With certain notable exceptions, most varieties of foreign doves are shy creatures. This is especially true of those specimens which have been trapped in their native lands and then shipped to this country. However, foreign doves raised in captivity also have a strong fear of man and will invariably keep their distance when you enter their pen. It is well, therefore, to go into your dove pens only when it is really necessary and preferably to wear the same clothing each time so that your birds may quickly recognize you. In the dove pen, your movements should always be deliberate, never hasty. By and by your doves will come to know that you mean them no harm and will show some confidence in you. You and I have visited zoological gardens where the keepers would clean the dove pens without disturbing the occupants greatly. However, even

the doves kept in such places dislike very much being caught up and handled, in which respect they are unlike most domesticated pigeons. To facilitate the catching of certain specimens in an aviary without seriously disturbing all occupants, some fanciers place all feed in commodious trap-cages, which being accessible from the outside make going into the aviary to catch birds, unnecessary.

The best way in which to keep foreign doves is in spacious outdoor aviaries or flights. Except for small varieties, such as Diamond and Cape Doves, cages are not suitable. After years of experimentation, I have come to the conclusion that foreign doves are most likely to breed well in captivity if the conditions under which they are confined resemble at least in some important aspects those under which they breed when they are at liberty. Invariably these charming denizens of plain and forest prefer privacy. They like to hide in grasses or tall shrubs, and to nest in the cool shade of bushes or trees. Bare pens are so ugly and unnatural. Why not beautify them a little by planting here and there shrubs and trees and at the same time provide the birds with a more natural home? They will nest in the plants you provide and will not rob them of their leaves, as do finches or parakeets.

The roof of your dove pen may be either open—that is constructed of wire-netting—or covered in part or whole with boards or other suitable material. Doves enjoy bathing in the sun and rain; therefore an open-top enclosure is usually more to their liking. However, I have raised many a fine young dove in pens with solid roofs. I like the protection which such roofs afford doves against prowling cats that, especially at night, frighten the birds so that many of them will desert their nests and dash madly against the wire-netting. Here in California many dove breeders place a thick layer of palm or other branches on top of their aviaries to serve as sufficient shelter from sun and rain. A better way, as I have indicated, is to plant shrubs and trees in the aviary. In regions with severe climates, the doves must be given a reasonably warm, draft-proof, and thoroughly dry house during the winter months as they are susceptible to continued wet and cold weather. Here on the Pacific Coast we leave our doves in the same outdoor enclosure summer and winter. An occasional frost does not seem to hurt them. However, during heavy or continued rain-

storms, most of them have to be removed from open pens to suitable shelters. Once their plumage is thoroughly wet, they cannot rise from the ground, where they soon catch cold and die. In all other respects foreign doves are easy to keep, hardy, and long-lived. A fellow fancier has a pair of Bleeding Heart pigeons which are seventeen years old. Of course, if the doves are kept in filthy cages and fed on musty or otherwise unsound seed, they quickly develop canker and die. Given clean water, a variety of seeds, and pleasant, quiet breeding quarters, they will remain in good health for many a year.

Since at breeding time most doves are wont to take possession of a considerable area surrounding their nests, it is best never to crowd them. Only a limited number of breeding pairs should be kept in the same enclosure, unless it be large; otherwise there will be constant fighting with resultant losses of eggs and young. Needless to say, the smaller the dove pen, the fewer pairs should be housed in it. Almost ideal breeding quarters are provided by pens accommodating single pairs.

It is difficult to say which species are likely to live more or less harmoniously together in an enclosure. The only test is actual try-out during the breeding season, for it is then that the doves begin to fight spiritedly for their rights, frequently killing other doves. Some fanciers make it a point to keep some large species, such as African Triangular Spotted and Band-tailed pigeons, with small ones, as Diamond, Ruddy Ground, and Passerine Doves. Others prefer to keep together varieties of approximately the same size. In a large aviary, which affords the weaker doves ample opportunity for escape, half a dozen or more varieties may be kept together with reasonably good breeding results.

Special consideration must be given to the doves' nesting habits. Some of the so-called ground doves, such as the Australian Plumed Dove, prefer to nest on the ground among grasses and low shrubs, while others, such as the Australian Crested and the Indian Greenwing, nest three and more feet off the ground. In other words, if you keep different species in one enclosure, make sure that not all of them are ground nesters.

Next to live shrubs and trees, the best nesting facilities which you can offer your doves are solid wooden boxes of suitable size with half-open fronts. Provide the boxes with

waterproof tops or roofs and hang them at varying heights and in half-dark places. Invariably you will find that most doves will occupy those nest-boxes first which are well hidden. In the aviaries of the San Diego Zoological Garden, one of the finest in America, foreign doves nest in wire-baskets hung securely under shelters of dry palm leaves. If you have live shrubs and trees in your aviaries, the doves will build their nests, usually rather flimsy affairs, in the branches of these live plants. Last year a pair of my Diamond Doves built a beautiful little nest in the branches of a cherry tree and a pair of Bleeding Hearts built a very haphazard nest but a few feet off the ground in a fine deodar. Both species raised their youngsters to maturity in these places. Their nesting material consisted largely of dry sticks of varying lengths. Many dove fanciers cover all nest-box bottoms with short-cut straw, long pine needles, or other more or less suitable material. If not seriously disturbed, foreign doves, like domesticated pigeons, will use the same nesting site season after season. It is well therefore not to clean the nest-boxes during the breeding season, so as not to break up the birds' breeding cycle, for they are sometimes very slow to begin another.

To insure success in breeding foreign doves, begin with true pairs. Like pigeons, most doves mate for life. There are some varieties of foreign doves the male of which differs decidedly from the female, not only in that he is larger but in that his plumage is more showy and beautiful so that even the beginning fancier can distinguish the sexes at any time. Bronzewing, Greenwing, Pigmy Ground, Blue Ground, Cape, Bar-tailed Cuckoo, Dwarf Turtle, Passerine, Tambourine, Ruddy Quail, and other doves belong to this group. There are many other equally attractive species, however, in which there are but slight differences in size and coloring between males and females. For instance, ordinarily it is not easy to sex Blue Spotted or Galapagos doves, or Bleeding Heart pigeons. With them, the fancier must patiently wait until mating time when the males begin to coo and display their plumage to the opposite sex. Once you have discovered a true pair, be sure to band the male on one and the female on the opposite leg so that you may easily recognize them at any future time.

Love-making among foreign doves differs considerably from that of domesticated pigeons, each variety showing individual

traits in this respect. Usually the male bows before his mate with outspread wings and tail, at the same time uttering short, sharp coos, very unlike those of any domesticated pigeon. Since each species of foreign doves has its peculiar mating behavior, I cannot generalize. To describe it in detail would require far more space than is available. Suffice it to say that the pairing activities of foreign doves, usually initiated by the male, he being in many species the more attractively colored, furnish the fancier with one of the most fascinating subjects for observation.

Soon after the nest is built, the eggs appear. Most species of foreign doves, except the Crowned Pigeon, the Nicobar Pigeon, and a few other very large varieties which lay but one egg, lay two eggs. Their color ranges from a pure white to cream. Incubation begins with most species after the first egg is dropped, and it lasts ordinarily from fifteen to nineteen days. The female sits at night, in the early morning and late evening; the male, the remainder of the time. The former assumes the major burden of incubation. In observing a pair of Cape Doves I found the male limiting his brooding activities to from three to four hours a day. At the approach of hatching time, his mate refused to leave the nest altogether, apparently not willing to entrust so important a task to her mate, who sat for an hour or more at the edge of the nest-box ready to do his share of the incubation.

If properly paired, most foreign doves will feed their young until they are almost ready to leave the nest. At this time the parents will frequently let their offspring starve to death and will begin to nest anew. Unless the starving young are hand-fed, which is at best a delicate and somewhat laborious task, they will die, for though they may be fully feathered and even be able to fly a little, it will be a week or ten days before they pick up seeds and may safely be considered raised. I am confident that were it not for the many losses of young suffered by dove fanciers from this as well as from other causes, not only would we find many more people keep foreign doves, but the prices of doves would also be lower.

Of course, there are exceptions to the general rule cited above. I have found Bronzewing, Greenwing, Ruddy Ground, Blue Ground, Australian Crested, and Diamond Doves to be dependable feeders and rearers. If one of, or both, their young

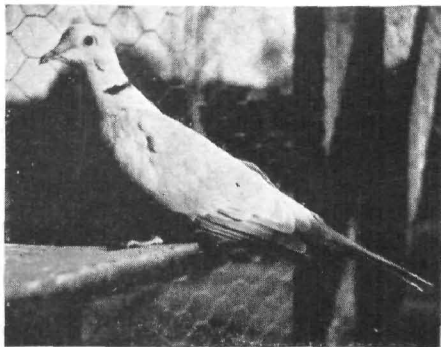


leave the nest too early and are, while on the ground, in danger of starving, I simply put them back into the nest. Most young doves either will not or cannot fly back into the nest. Moreover, their parents will not seek them out on the ground. Some fanciers place boxes filled with straw or hay on the ground directly below the nest-boxes in the hope that if the youngsters leave the nest too early, they will drop into these boxes without injuring themselves.

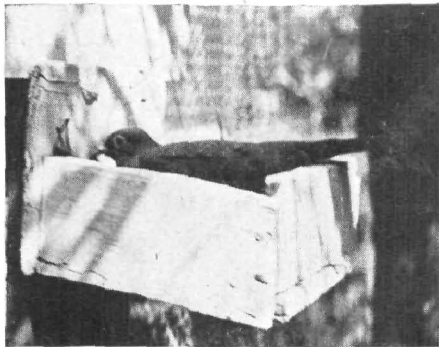
Just because some of your doves fail to raise their first or second batch of young, do not jump at the conclusion that they will persist in this pernicious practice. Have patience! Sometimes it takes a pair of doves a season or two to get really settled in an aviary; then, all of a sudden, and seemingly for no plausible reason they begin to rear all their youngsters without difficulty. To induce foreign doves to continue to feed their offspring until these can shift for themselves, some breeders will remove the male or the female (whichever is the poorer feeder or wants to start nesting again). This expedient may be applied successfully in some cases, but it does not work generally.

By far the least troublesome and most practical means of raising the young of those species of foreign doves which turn out to be poor feeders, is to use foster parents. Every fancier should have a sufficient number of ring-neck or other dependable feeders on hand. A fellow fancier has a pair of common ringneck doves which will raise practically any species of medium-sized foreign doves. I have had very good success with using the California Mourning Doves as foster parents. For the smaller varieties, Cape Doves for example, I have used Diamond Doves with reasonably good results. The whole scheme is very simple—I merely place the foreign doves' eggs under the foster doves, making sure that the discrepancy in time between the laying of the two sets of eggs does not exceed two or three days. Since most species of foreign doves have a seemingly unlimited capacity for laying eggs, which frequently they refuse to incubate, the fancier can save many of them and place them under the foster doves.

Moreover, while many foreign doves are extremely wild, I have found both ring-neck and mourning doves rather gentle and therefore easy to handle—though I am not one to peek into their nests every day. Sometimes the foster doves will de-



**199** *The RINGNECK DOVE is a special favorite with beginners in the fancy. Frequently ringneck doves render valuable service as feeders for the rarer foreign doves.*



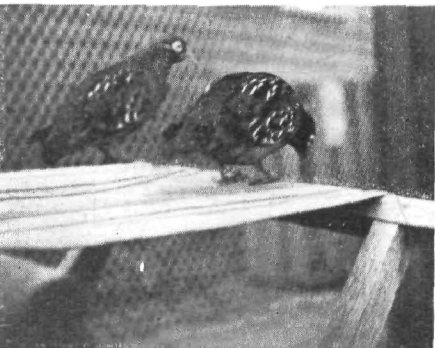
**200** *Sitting tight! A CALIFORNIA MOURNING DOVE on her fifth setting of eggs in one season.*



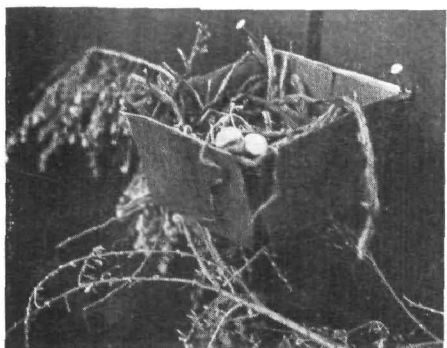
**201** *AUSTRALIAN BRONZE-WING PIGEONS about to relieve each other in the brooding of young.*



**202** *MALE AUSTRALIAN BRONZE-WING PIGEON brooding young. The squabs are "out" for a breath of fresh air at the edge of the nest.*



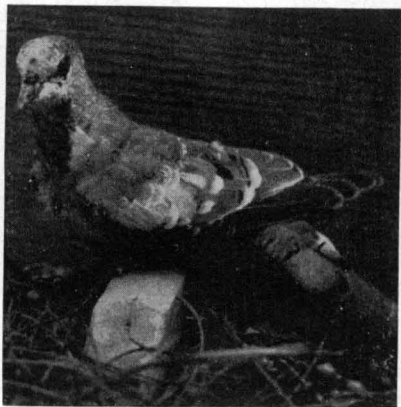
**203** *Quaint and Curious! A pair of GALAPAGOS DOVES. How they love to dig in the ground for beetles and worms!*



**204** *Nest and eggs of the CAPE DOVE.*



**205 MALE CAPE DOVE**  
*Photo by author.*



**206 YOUNG MALE CAPE DOVE**  
*Photo by author.*

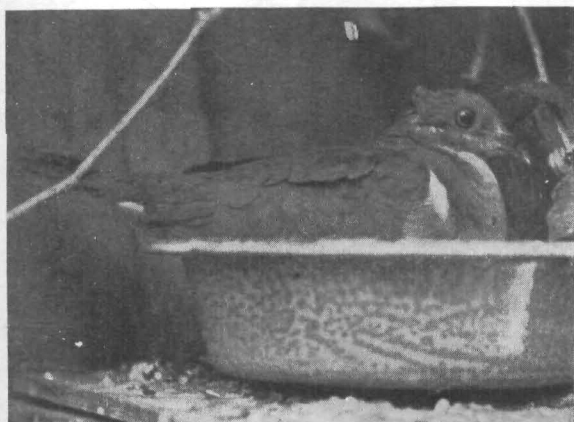


**207 SPLENDID PIGEON**  
*Photo by author.*

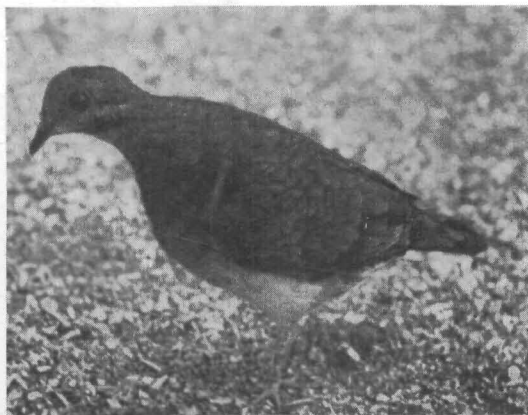


**208 FEMALE CAPE DOVE ON THE NEST**  
*Photo by author.*

209 RUDDY QUAIL DOVE SQUAB  
*Photo by author.*



210 MALE RUDDY QUAIL DOVE  
ON THE NEST  
*Photo by author.*

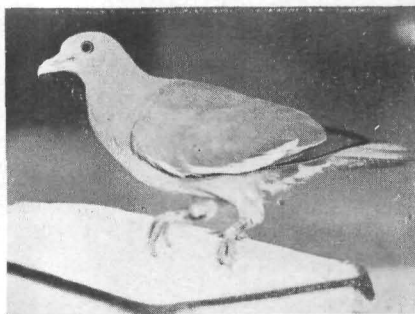


211 FEMALE RUDDY QUAIL DOVE  
*Photo by author.*



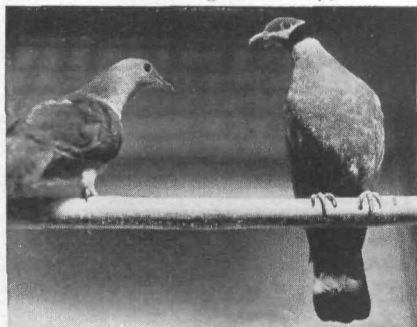
**212 WHITE-THROATED PIGEON** (*COLUMBA VITIENSIS HALMAHEIRA*)

(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



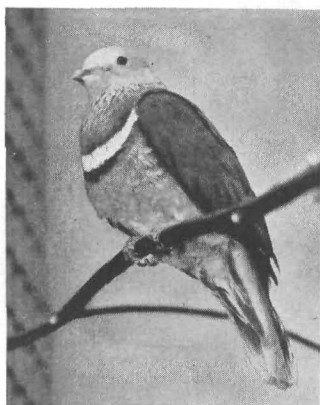
**213 MALAYAN PINK-NECKED FRUIT PIGEON** (*TRERON VERNANS GRISEICAPILLA*)

(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



**214 MULLER'S FRUIT PIGEON** (*DUCULA M. MULLERII*)

(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



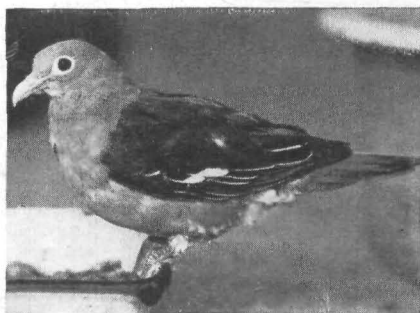
**215 SUNDA ISLAND FRUIT PIGEON** (*TRERON LEUCOTRERON PORPHYREA*)

(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



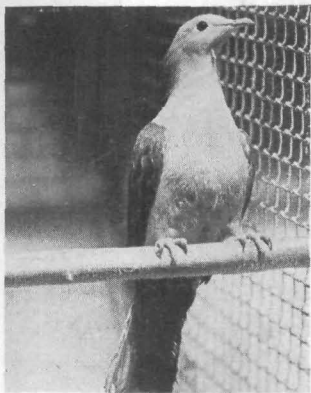
**216 GOLDEN-HEADED FRUIT PIGEON** (*SYLPHITRERON ORNATUS GESTROI*)

(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)

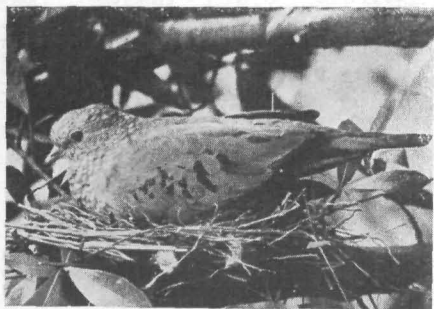


**217 LESSER THICK-BILLED FRUIT PIGEON** (*TRERON C. CURVIROSTRA*)

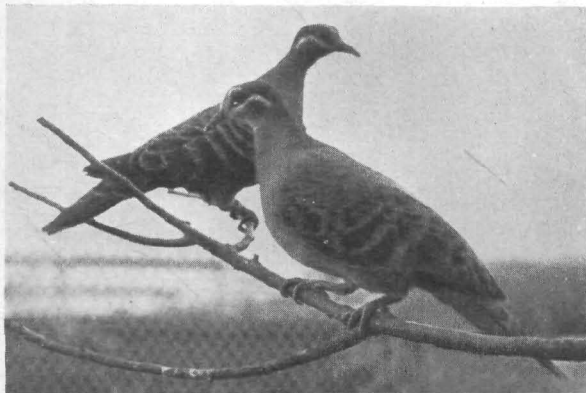
(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



**218 ORANGE-NAPED FRUIT PIGEON (DUCULA  
AENEA PAULINA)**  
(Photo, N. Y. Zoological Society)



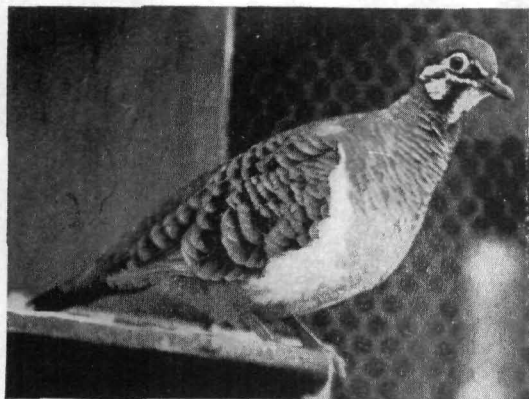
**219 PASSERINE DOVE NESTING IN OAK TREE  
(CHAMAEPELIA PASSERINA)**  
(Photo by Wray H. Nicholson)



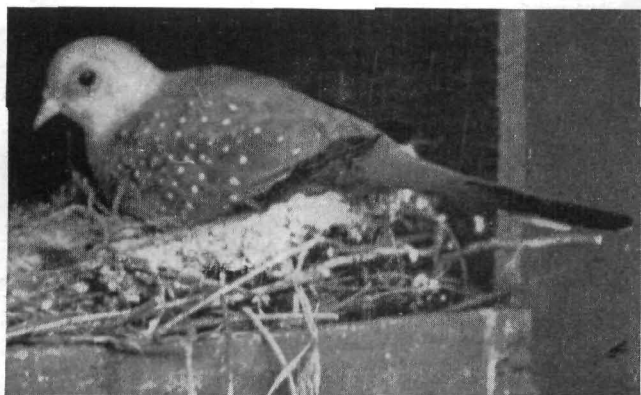
**220 MALE AND FEMALE  
COMMON BRONZEWING PI-  
GEON (PHAPS CHALCOPTERA)**  
(Photo by Author)

**221 YOUNG DIAMOND DOVE (GEOPELIA CU-  
NEATA)**  
(Photo by Author)

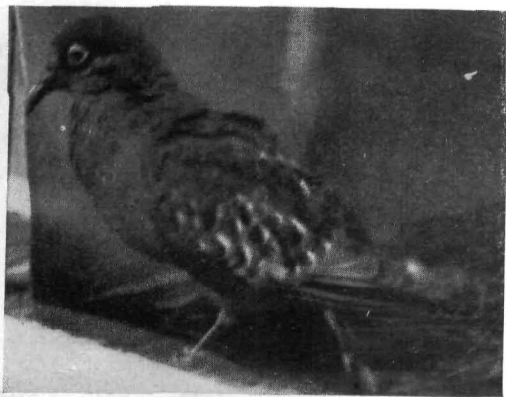




222 PARTRIDGE BRONZE-WING  
OR SQUATTER PIGEON  
*Photo by author.*



223 MALE DIA-  
MOND DOVE NEST-  
ING  
*Photo by author.*



224 GALAPAGOS DOVE  
*Photo by author.*



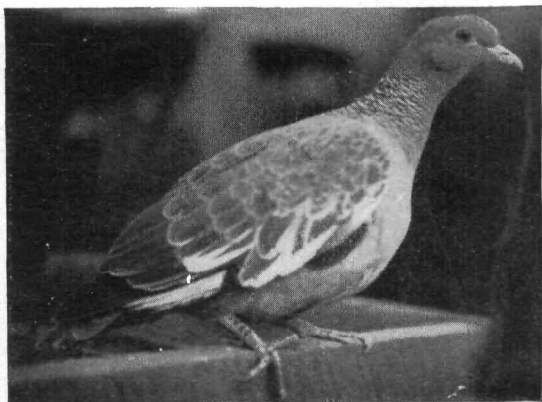


**225** GREY-HOODED AMETHYST DOVE  
*Photo by author.*



**226** AUSTRALIAN  
 CRESTED DOVE WITH  
 SQUAB

*Photo by G. L. Dusan through courtesy of Dr. W. E. Hurlburt.*



**227** PICAZURO PIGEON  
*Photo by author.*

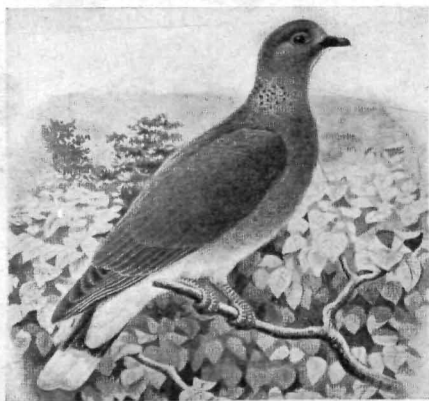




**228 WHITE FRUIT PIGEON** (MYRISTICIVORA LUCTUOSA)  
(Reproduced from Avicultural Magazine)



**229 WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON** (COLUMBA LEUCOCEPHALA)  
(Reproduced from Avicultural Magazine)



**230 MADAGASCAR TURTLE DOVE** (TURTUR PICTURATUS)  
(Reproduced from Avicultural Magazine)

sert their stepchildren as soon as the latter get well-feathered and show their true colors. To forestall such recognition before the young are fully ready to leave the nest and to shift for themselves, it is a good plan to hang the nest-boxes of all foster doves in semi-dark places where they cannot see the color of the young squabs. Once the young doves feed themselves, they should be removed to a separate pen.

Foreign doves show much individuality. Each species has its own way of flying, cooing, feeding, and breeding. For instance, there is a great difference in the breeding habits of the Australian Plumed Dove and the Australian Bronzewing. It is these differences which make the keeping of foreign doves so fascinating a hobby and which enable the fancier to specialize according to his whims and the facilities at his disposal. I have a friend in the city who keeps, owing to limited space, only small varieties of doves; another who favors only those doves which are easily sexed; a third who prefers to keep only large-sized foreign pigeons. Once you have kept several varieties of foreign doves, you will soon learn which suit your tastes and needs best.

In starting your dove project, begin with a few varieties which are easy to breed, as, for instance, Diamond and Ruddy Ground Doves. Then, as you learn to know and to like your birds, add other species. Be sure to guard against crowding your aviaries and thus losing numerous settings of eggs and youngsters through more or less incessant fighting. Remember also that foreign doves enjoy privacy and like to be let alone most of the time. Never enter their abode at night, for if you do, the birds will dash off nests and roosts and fly violently against the wire-netting, often seriously injuring their heads and wings.

You can do much toward making your hobby successful by feeding the doves properly. In a dry place, safe from mice and other vermin, give them a variety of seeds, each in a separate dish. You will soon observe that Diamond Doves, for instance, are very fond of millet, Galapagos Doves of hemp, and so on. By keeping each kind of seed separately, you can easily regulate the needed supply, thus reducing waste, and you will also learn soon which seeds your doves prefer. Among the seeds relished by most kinds of foreign doves are millet, hemp, rice, wheat, dari, and kaffir corn. In addition to seeds, I give my

doves bread crumbs and small pieces of fresh lettuce, which they relish greatly. Some doves, as for instance the Bronzewing and the Bleeding Heart, like angle and meal worms very much. Since foreign doves differ in their various requirements, it behooves their keeper to study their individual needs with a view to keeping his birds in as healthy a condition as possible.

In regions having mild winter climates, many foreign doves breed the whole year round. Thus neither my Bronzewing pigeons nor Diamond Doves are at all bothered by cold nights—we have frosts in California occasionally in December, January, and February, when the water-dishes are covered with ice. They will usually continue to breed month after month, stopping occasionally in the early fall to take a few weeks' deserved rest. It is not easy to say whether these breeding conditions are likely to weaken their health and shorten their life's breeding period. It seems clear, however, that they are not breeding too rapidly, since these two varieties raise their young carefully to maturity each time before laying subsequent clutches of eggs. The Cape Doves seem to be somewhat more sensitive to climatic changes, for they stop breeding activities promptly with the advent of cold nights in November and will usually not resume them until springtime when the nights get warmer.

In conclusion, the fancier of foreign doves, or any other foreign birds for that matter can greatly add to the enjoyment of his hobby by joining the American or the British Avicultural Society. Membership in either entitles him to a free subscription of a very informative and interesting magazine in which he is bound to find many helpful suggestions for making his hobby more successful.

#### SOME POPULAR BREEDS OF SO-CALLED FOREIGN DOVES AND PIGEONS

OWING TO lack of space, I shall describe only a few of the well-known and more or less popular breeds of so-called foreign doves usually kept by fanciers in this country. Since the keeping of the gorgeously colored fruit pigeons is almost wholly confined to zoological gardens, I shall not dwell on this subject.

Today the most popular foreign dove is undoubtedly the *Diamond Dove* (*Geopelia cuneata*). It may be kept in aviary or cage and becomes tame quickly. Originally brought from Australia, this exceedingly charming foreigner is of slender shape, its total length being approximately eight inches. The Diamond Dove has a soft-grey head, neck and breast, which color fades into white on the belly and under the tail-coverts. The back and shoulders are cinnamon brown. The upper portion of the wings is covered with small white spots. The eye cere and the eyes themselves are bright red, the beak olive brown, and the feet flesh-colored. The female is somewhat smaller than the male and has larger white spots on the wings. Frequently her eye cere is not as strongly developed as that of the male. This charming little bird breeds freely in captivity, rearing many youngsters each season. There is probably no other foreign dove as easy to keep and breed as the Diamond Dove. Breeding pairs may usually be obtained at a cost of a few dollars.

One of the most prolific doves which I have kept, a native of eastern South America is the *Talpacoti* or *Ruddy Ground Dove* (*Chamaepelia talpacoti*). It is a small dove, being only about seven inches long, and is colored a pretty vinaceous cinnamon, which in the female is earth-brown. The distinguishing mark of this breed consists of gray primaries or flight feathers.

Closely related to the Ruddy Ground Dove is the *Rufous-winged Ground Dove* (*Chamaepelia rufipennis*), a native of Central and South America. The female of this variety is much paler in color than the male, and therefore more easily recognized than the female of the Talpacoti.

Belonging to the same family as the Talpacoti and the Rufous-winged Doves, but being native to California, the Southwest, and Mexico is the *Passerine Dove* (*Chamaepelia passerina*), a short-legged bird between six and seven inches long. The ground color of the male is a pinkish vinous, that of the female an earthy brown. Both show a scaled breast and neck. Rather wild by nature, the Passerine Dove is not a very fast breeder. It guards its nesting area jealously and will fight intruders off courageously.

Popular with many fanciers is the *Zebra Dove* (*Geopelia striata*), a graceful, slender bird slightly over eight inches

long. It derives its name from the narrow black lines with which the main part of the brownish-grey body is barred. The front of the head, cheeks, and throat are an ashy gray, the breast pale vinous. The sexes are not always easy to distinguish, the female being somewhat smaller than the male and less reddish in the region of the occipital bone. Once well-settled, Zebra Doves are steady breeders, but they are inclined to be quarrelsome.

Another popular dove and a dependable breeder and feeder is the *Blue Ground Dove* (*Claravis pretiosa*). The male of this species is blue, the female brown. This active little bird, whose habitat ranges from Mexico to Peru, is about eight inches long. The pair I kept for several years invariably raised but one squab at a time. Young Blue Ground doves are colored like the female parent; after a few months the males change to blue.

An unusually attractive little dove, in size and shape resembling the Diamond dove, and hailing from Africa, is the *Cape* or *Harlequin Dove* (*Ena capensis*). It is a brownish gray, the male being easily recognized by his deep black face. He is much more handsome than the female. Owing to its long tail, this dove looks like an immense butterfly when flying. The Cape Dove is a ready breeder, but it frequently fails to raise its young to maturity. I let Diamond Doves hatch the Cape Doves' eggs. In breeding Cape Doves my experience has been that four out of every five youngsters turn out to be males, so that extra females are always at a premium. Like many other varieties of foreign doves, the Cape Dove may be had in Europe for about half the price it commands in this country.

Also imported from Africa, but being round and compact in shape, is the *Tambourine Dove* (*Tympanistria bicolor*). This bird, which is approximately eight inches long, is easily recognized by a white face, breast, and belly, all contrasting sharply against a dark-brown back. The breast of the female is gray and her back light-brown. The name tambourine was given to this rather showy but shy bird because its coo at a distance resembles the sound of a tambourine.

A splendid breeder and feeder is the *Indian Greenwing Dove* (*Chalcophaps indica*), of which species I have raised many fine specimens. In shape this dove is compact and sturdy, somewhat like the Blue Ground Dove, but larger, its

length being about ten inches. It is sometimes called Emerald Dove. The color of this shy bird is a striking bottle-green, the male having streaks of white above the eyes, on the forehead and the shoulder butts. The bill of this species is bright red. Greenwings should not be disturbed during the breeding season, for in their hurried attempt to leave the nest, they often throw eggs and young on the ground.

Because of its gentleness an old favorite with many breeders is the Australian *Bronzewing Pigeon* (*Phaps chalcoptera*), measuring from thirteen to fourteen inches. It is a husky bird with short legs. The male has wings adorned with highly metallic feathers, showing colors of green, copper, and blue, which are especially brilliant in the sunlight. He is further distinguished from the female by a rich buff forehead and a white line running across each side of the face. Bronzewing pigeons are usually very dependable and hardy breeders. They become tame in time. My pair would breed the year round. In addition to the usual dry seeds, these pigeons relish angle and meal worms, also bread.

A pigeon similar in shape and size to the above-mentioned species, but much more difficult to breed is the *Brush Bronzewing* (*Phaps elegans*). The male's forehead is sable-red, his crown gray. The breast and neck are slate gray, there being a triangular spot of dark chestnut on the throat. The back and wings are chestnut. The wing feathers are shot with green, copper, and steel-blue. The female's plumage is much plainer, with the forehead showing much less buff color. Brush Bronzewing pigeons are quiet birds, spending most of their time on the ground.

A really beautiful dove which has been bred repeatedly in American aviaries, but which nevertheless is rare, is the *Plumed Ground Dove* (*Lophophaps plumifera*), imported from Australia. Its distinguishing mark is a long, straight head-crest. The general coloring of this charming ground dove, which many people mistake for a quail, is a rich cinnamon fawn. About the face appear patches of white. The wings show irregular streaks of black and gray. The sexes are colored alike, but the male is slightly larger than the female. The Plumed Dove nests on the ground, where it is easily disturbed. Though foster parents will raise the young to maturity, they frequently stop to feed them once the squabs have left the

nest and roam about on the ground. At this time recourse must be had to hand-feeding. I have had delightfully tame specimens of this charming bird which would follow me about like dogs.

A foreign pigeon usually slow to breed, especially in small quarters, but being much sought after by fanciers owing to its striking coloring is the *Bleeding Heart Pigeon* (*Philogoenas luzonica*), whose habitat is Luzon in the Philippine Islands. It is so named after an irregular blood-red patch appearing in the center of the upper breast, which is white. In the hen of this species the patch is smaller and less brightly colored. Moreover, she is somewhat smaller than the male. This beautiful bird spends most of its time on the ground, but prefers to roost up high in the night. An allied variety is the *Bartlett Bleeding Heart Pigeon* (*Philogoenas crinigera*).

One of the largest pigeons in existence, if indeed not the largest, is the *Victoria Crowned Pigeon* (*Goura victoria*), a magnificent bird characterized by an erect, fan-shaped crest adorning its head. Its general color is bluish slate. It is approximately thirty inches long. This handsome bird, about the size of a turkey, is often seen in zoological gardens. It lays but one egg, which is about two and a half inches long, at each setting. In its native land, the Crowned Pigeon forages on the ground, its general behavior being similar to that of pheasants.

#### BREEDING THE CAPE OR MASKED DOVE

IN THE Cape, Harlequin, or Masked Dove (*Ena capensis*), Southern Africa and Arabia have provided the foreign-dove enthusiast with one of the most graceful varieties. Perhaps the outstanding characteristics of this slender little bird are its unusually long tail and its butterfly-like flight.

Essentially a bird of quiet disposition, the Cape Dove spends most of its time in the aviary perching high. In its native habitat, however, it is largely regarded as a ground bird and may be found in and near gardens, farms, and cattle kraals, where it forages for various seeds. I have never known a Cape Dove to accept meal-worms or other live food, as do many of the larger species of foreign doves. Owing to its gentle demeanor, this dove may safely be kept with finches and

other small seed-eaters, whose nesting activities it is not likely to disturb.

That the Cape Dove, which British fanciers prefer to call Masked Dove, has long been a great favorite among aviculturists is to some extent shown by the fact that it was imported as early as 1854, some specimens finding their way into the Amsterdam, Holland, Zoological Garden, and eleven years later into the one at London, England.

Despite the unquestionable popularity of this lovely little foreigner, it is not kept as much as it should be, owing probably to the fact that though breeding freely from early spring till early fall (and in California practically through the winter months), the Cape Dove seldom raises a large percentage of its young to maturity during a given season. At least that has been my experience—and I have not been without at least one pair of Cape Doves for the last ten years.

If treated gently and carefully, Cape Doves become tame quickly. At nesting time this tameness is revealed in the female's sitting very tight and refusing to leave her eggs or young at the approach of her keeper. Not so the male—at least in my experience. Hence, I have found it a comparatively simple matter to photograph the female. She showed no anxiety whatever, no matter how much I intruded upon her brooding activities. Her lord and master, on the other hand, required a dozen or more very patient and careful approaches, spread over the better part of a week, before he would remain on the nest long enough to let me take his close-up.

I have found Cape Doves more susceptible to cold than Diamond Doves. It is well known that the Cape Dove thrives in very warm climates, bathing and basking in the hot sun at every opportunity. I am reminded of the fancier who kept a pair of Cape Doves with some delicate finches in an aviary which, in addition to having the usual wire-netting, was glass-enclosed. As the daily temperature rose, it was customary to remove some, or all, of the glass coverings and to replace them later in the day. Imagine this man's surprise when having neglected to remove the glass-frames from the aviary on a really hot day, he found his little finches panting, their wings drooped, but his Cape Doves were greatly enjoying a sun-bath in their very much overheated abode!



## DO DOVES TELL TIME?

IT HAS always been somewhat of a puzzle to me how birds tell what time of day it is. This applies especially to the breeding season when male and female take more or less regular turns, first at keeping the eggs, and later the young, warm. What tells the male bird, for instance, how early in the morning to fly to the nest in order to relieve his mate, who sits on the eggs all night, and so enable her to get food and water?

For answer to my queries, I turned to a pair of Harlequin or Cape Doves that thrive in a large outdoor aviary together with many kinds of finches and other birds. In flight these graceful doves, with their hesitating wing motion and their very long, slender tail, look like huge butterflies. The habitat of this charming little dove is tropical and Southern Africa.

It so happened that for several weeks my work during the forenoon took me near these doves' aviary so that I had ample opportunity to tell quite accurately at what time each morning Mr. Harlequin would attempt to coax Mrs. Harlequin to leave her precious eggs. Sometimes he had to coax her for a long time, but of that later.

My observations proper began on the first day of August when two small white eggs appeared in a nest consisting of a few twigs carelessly thrown together. It was built atop a little wooden box five feet above the ground in an aviary with a solid roof. Nine-thirty said my trusty watch that first day; but the following day, to my surprise, the male bird relieved his faithful mate at 7:45. At first he sat quietly on the corner of the nest-box. Then he began carefully to edge his way into the nest until he finally sat beside his mate, who seemed reluctant to leave it, as if she did not trust him very much. The morning of the third day was cloudy so that the sunlight did not enter the doves' flight until quite late. It was therefore no great surprise to find the male dove beginning his daily incubation at 9:32. However, the next day, which was sunny, found him taking his place beside his mate, who for some reason known only to herself would simply not leave her plain abode at 7:40. Having waited in vain for ten or fifteen minutes, he flew away and did not return to the nest until shortly before nine o'clock,

at which time he had no trouble whatever in inducing his handsome wife to let him take his turn at incubating.

On the two succeeding mornings, both bright with sunshine, Mr. Harlequin went to work promptly at 7:45, and 7:48, respectively, thus indicating that the length of his stay on the nest is probably governed by the brightness of the prevailing light. On these two occasions, the female, instead of leaving the nest slowly as usual, flew off quickly at the approach of her mate. Apparently she was hungry and did not have to be urged to relinquish the nest.

Even though the sun shone brightly and early the morning following, it was not until 8:44, or approximately an hour later than on the preceding day, that I saw the doves exchanging places on the little nest. And, lo, behold, the day after that my timepiece pointed to 9:41. "Why so late on this clear morning, Mr. Harlequin?" I felt like asking. For answer he continued to sit very still, eyeing me nervously as if to say, "If you don't want my good mate to work from this moment on and all the rest of this long day, you had better not come any closer." At no time during the period of observation did the birds exchange places again at so late a time. The figures for the succeeding mornings are as follows: 8:12, 7:40, 9:02, 7:50, 8:50, 8:15, and 8:32.

As soon as young appeared in the nest, the male practically went on a vacation; for I found his mate doing most of the brooding in the day, in addition, of course, to the all-night brooding which most female birds do. It seemed that shortly after the eggs hatched, the male found the female more and more unwilling to entrust the care of her two children to him. Not infrequently he would sit beside her for from twenty to thirty minutes, ready to do his part in keeping the chicks warm, but their mother would simply not be relieved of her duties. So Mr. Harlequin left and took the rest of the day off.

It is quite apparent that the male of this particular pair of Cape Doves does not take his home duties and work too seriously, arriving at the nest anywhere between 7:40 and 9:40. Nor will he wait more than thirty minutes for his mate to make up her mind as to whether she wants to leave the nest or not. A handsome but lazy husband this particular Cape Dove, whose sense of time, while perhaps not remarkable, is nevertheless well developed.

A SEASON'S NESTING OF THE RUDDY  
QUAIL DOVE

A CERTAIN pair of Ruddy Quail Doves (*Oreopeleia montana*), the male of which species is bright rufous and the female a drab brown, has been breeding in one of my aviaries uninterruptedly since early April. Only recently I separated them in order to give them a well-earned rest.

During the seven months' breeding, these busy birds have raised nine youngsters, six males and three females. However, this statement needs amplification. Whenever both salmon-buff eggs hatched, the parents would feed the squabs well until they were almost ready to leave the nest—at approximately three weeks of age. From that time on, one of them—usually the smaller: the female—would be entirely neglected so that I had to take matters in my own hands practically all season in order to save the neglected and starving youngsters.

Hand-raising a half-grown *Oreopeleia montana* is a rather interesting, even if somewhat delicate, task. These little chaps are quite intelligent; soon they recognize the hand that feeds them and open their beaks quite willingly to admit the usual menu of mealworms, mush, lukewarm goats' milk, and a little codliver oil. Of these items, they like the first and the last mentioned most, perhaps because they contain the most, or the most essential, vitamins.

After the young Ruddy Quail Doves have been nursed carefully for a week or ten days, during which time they get from three to five light feedings daily, they begin to eat small mealworms as well as seeds. The mealworms they prefer. All of a sudden, so it seems, there sets in a certain maturation or ripening of their senses, which prompts them to take an interest in the worms and kernels set before them and to which heretofore they have paid practically no attention.

After a young Ruddy Quail Dove has once started to peck, it learns to eat within a few days. At first its aim is so light and faulty that the dove misses most of the grains and worms for which it reaches. But day by day there is rapid and noticeable improvement and long before the initial week is gone, the young bird's aim in picking food off the floor of the cage has become so accurate that hardly a worm or kernel is missed.

One very desirable effect of raising these young doves by hand is that almost ever after they stay tame, which is a great advantage when much later in their lives you wish to inspect their nests during the breeding season.

Depending somewhat on weather conditions, the period of incubation of the Ruddy Quail Dove is from twelve to fourteen days. These doves are excellent sitters, both male and female taking regular turns, the male incubating from morning until later afternoon, and his mate the remaining time. The ceremony of relieving each other of nesting duties, if ceremony it may be called, sometimes consumes as much as half an hour's time, with both birds in as well as on the nest, the one gently shoving the other off.

During the first part of the breeding season, the particular pair of doves which I have in mind built a fairly substantial nest of twigs and leaves atop a cypress, about four and a-half feet off the ground. At this site they raised a number of broods. When cats disturbed them one night, they sought and found a safer place on top of a wooden box which was partially hidden under a projecting roof. So flimsy was the nest they built here, however, that I feared the eggs would surely roll off the level boxtop; I therefore placed a pan filled with sand on the box and put the few twigs which the birds had used for a nest, into it. This improved nesting arrangement Mrs. Ruddy Quail accepted and approved with alacrity, and it has served her quite satisfactorily ever since.

Young Ruddy Quail Doves are easy to sex since the males change from a dark brown to a rich rufous at the age of about two and a-half or three months, while the young females change to a somewhat lighter brown. Though I have kept youngsters of varying ages with their parents, there has been no quarreling whatever amongst the family. Ruddy Quail Doves are not pugnacious. I would recommend them to any dove enthusiast who wishes to keep several varieties in one enclosure, having but little space. Though these doves are swift on the wing, they prefer to spend most of their time on the ground, in the shelter of grasses and shrubs.

My Ruddy Quail Doves thrive on a diet of the usual bird seed, to which I add a little crushed sunflower seed, of which they are very fond. An important and very nourishing addition to their feed consists of live mealworms—from ten to a dozen

fat ones for each grown dove a day during the breeding season. Greens, such as lettuce and dandelion, these birds do not seem to relish. During a gentle rain they love to lie on one side with spread wing, letting the drops fall where they may, and the more the merrier.

Since Ruddy Quail Doves are rather friendly toward other doves and since they are quite easily tamed and breed well, they form a welcome addition to any aviary. Theirs is a quiet charm that is sure to endear them to the birdlover.

BREEDING THE WESTERN MOURNING DOVE  
(ZENAUDURA MACROURA MARGINELLA)

THIS GENTLE dove, which with the proper treatment becomes quickly tame in the aviary, I have now kept for a number of years, mainly for two reasons. In the first place, there is its plaintive "mourning" coo, penetrating, vibrant, with the suggestion of far-off, lonely woods and deep forests. It is the only call-note uttered by this species—the male, to be correct, the female having no such note. Both sexes, however, utter a whirring note of fear at the approach of strange animals or people. Moreover, in sudden and fast flight, the Mourning Dove emits a whistling wing-note, which you are not likely to forget once you have heard it. My other reason for keeping a number of pairs of this dove is that it has proved to be a very dependable foster parent for the medium-sized species of foreign doves, which so frequently neglect their offspring. Especially valuable is the Mourning Dove's trait of staying near the youngsters just after they have left the nest and are sitting in some obscure corner on the ground of the aviary, waiting to be fed. As every dove-fancier knows, this is the most critical period in the life of young doves, many dying of starvation because their parents fail to seek them out when they are on the ground.

Mourning Doves are quite gentle, and therefore easy to handle—a great advantage when they are to serve as foster parents. No matter how closely I approach their nest, whichever bird is on the nest will sit tight, so that I have to lift it off if I want to see the contents of the nest. When the female is frightened off the nest, she usually drops to the ground where she goes into a series of odd contortions as if her wings were

broken and she were unable to fly. Undoubtedly this species of dove is one of the most prolific. In point of fact, I have a pair which at this writing is on its *fifth* setting of eggs, having successfully reared four pairs of youngsters so far this season. Like other kinds of doves, the Mourning Dove will sit on or between its young even though they are well-feathered, and even though the weather is very warm.

This dove is a careless nest builder, which if not disturbed will use the same nesting site season after season. Usually the succeeding clutch of eggs is laid a day or two after the young have left the nest. Always the squabs are sleek and well-fed. The old birds are very fond of bread. Mealworms they will not touch. Their favourite seeds seem to be millet and hemp, especially the latter. I have observed Mourning Doves take sun, but not water baths. They get along well with the smaller species of foreign doves, such as Cape and Diamond Doves. Surplus specimens released from the aviary frequently return after a few days. I always recognize them by their legbands, which, being colored and numbered, are easily identified. After they have had food and drink, they fly off swiftly into the nearby hills, and soon learn to shift for themselves.

#### OBSERVATION ON THE BREEDING OF AUSTRALIAN CRESTED AND OF GALAPAGOS DOVES

DURING A recent season I have had exceptionally good luck with a pair of Australian Crested Doves. As a matter of fact, they have raised five youngsters at this time (August), and have two more in the nest. This is an exceptionally good record for this particular pair in view of the fact that last year they invariably left their young to die of starvation. The only change which I have made in their care consists of the addition of fresh lettuce and some bread to their daily menu, which they relish greatly. Mealworms they refuse consistently. The giving of this bit of soft food seems to be responsible for the sudden change in their behavior. Whereas the birds, when on a straight seed diet, were frequently restless and discontented, as if they lacked something (perhaps it was salt), they are now quite content and have become excellent feeders of their youngsters.

Of the varieties of doves I have kept thus far, the Galapagos

are the most difficult to rear, since the old will so very frequently desert their young. Moreover, this dove is extremely pugnacious, fighting off doves twice its size; it must, therefore, be usually kept alone. But even within the narrow circle of its own family, the Galapagos Dove has a trying time keeping peace, since the male and the female are at odds most of the time during the breeding season. And yet I like this dove very much, for it is quickly tamed with various titbits, such as bread, hemp, and mealworms. The Galapagos Dove is not as common in America as it used to be, owing, no doubt, to the difficulties in breeding which I have just mentioned.

✓ NESTING NOTES ON THE BRONZE-WING  
PIGEON (PHAPS CHALCOPTEA)

I HAVE a pair of Bronze-wings which have become very tame, so that it is a pleasure indeed to observe their varied activities at close range. The first and perhaps most important characteristic of this particular pair of pigeons is that they have nested almost uninterruptedly since last August, taking but a few weeks' rest during the winter months. This does not mean that they have reared a large number of young. As a matter of fact, to date they have reared only four young, and all singly. Each time both eggs were fertile and both hatched, but each time the young hatching last was either too weak to survive or else was neglected by its parents.

The egg-laying capacity of the female Bronze-wing Pigeon is remarkable when it is considered that she has been laying practically uninterruptedly since last January. Apparently this great activity has not affected her well-being, for she is as healthy and vigorous as she has ever been. It will be interesting to observe for how long a period of time she will continue to breed under the present favorable climatic conditions.

For the period of a year these pigeons have nested in a large hanging-basket, though not always willingly. With the approach of nesting time, male and female become restless and apparently dissatisfied with their old nesting site. Several times they attempted to build in a feed-box close to the door of the aviary. As soon as I covered this box, however, they returned to their former nesting place. Always up to this time the

Bronze-wings have hatched their eggs, though frequently not rearing their young to maturity. The last two settings of eggs, however, they left, incubating them for only ten days. I do not know why they left the eggs.

The behavior of the Bronze-wings varies in other respects. I left one of their young with the parents, which, though getting very restless and nervous shortly before egg-laying time, did not harm the full-grown squab. Very early one morning last week I heard a noise as of much fluttering against the aviary wire and possible fighting. Investigation proved that the old Bronze-wing Pigeons were fighting the squab vigorously. This they had never done before. Of course, I removed the squab immediately.

The Bronze-wings are very fond of angle worms, which they devour whole and in considerable numbers. Of course, this delicacy is not often available. The seed they relish the most is hemp; millet they invariably leave in the feed-box. Green feed they do not take at all. One rather important respect in which these Bronze-wings differ from all my other pigeons and doves is that at night they prefer to roost in the sheltered and covered portion of the aviary, whereas the other doves sleep in the wire-covered flight under the open sky.



## Glossary

### TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS APPERTAINING TO PIGEONS AND PIGEON-RAISING

**A.O.C.** — any other color

**A.O.V.** — any other variety

**A.P.C.** — American Pigeon Club

**A.R.P.U.** — American Racing Pigeon Union

**argent** — applied to Modenas having a white center on the colored feather. Their ground color is white. The color effect of argent Modenas is similar to that of the Silverlaced Wyandotte chickens.

**A.R.U.** — American Racing Union

**badge** — pigeon with colored body and white wing tips

**band** — identification ring on pigeon's legs

**barred** — having bands of alternate colors running across the feather

**barrel** — frontal between the eye and the beak-wattle, as in medium-faced Antwerps

**bay** — yellow-orange color in eyes

**beard** — white feathers below beak of colored pigeons

**beetle-browed** — cere above eye leaning over

**bell-neck** — colored markings on back of neck against white background

**bib** — patch of colored feathers below beak of white pigeons

**bishoped** — white shoulder patches or wing-edgings of such shoulder-marked varieties as Oriental Frills and Turbits; a fault

**blocky** — having broad, substantial build; see "racy"

**bloom** — gloss, sheen, or finish on plumage

**body** — trunk of pigeon

**bolting eye** — prominent eye, as in Turbits

**booted** — feathered on shanks and toes

**box-beak** — close-fitting beak, as in Carriers and other stout-beaked breeds

**breed** — race, variety, kind, sort

**breeding down** — process of producing small specimens

**broken-colored** — having two or more colors

**broken-eyed** — lacking uniform color of eyes

**brows** — skull projections over eyes

**bull-eye** — eye with dark-colored iris; also called "black" eye

**canker** — a spreading, white ulcer in the mouth, caused by colds,

- unsanitary conditions, spoiled feed, and the like
- cap* — head markings of such varieties as Swallows
- carnucles* — irregular and other more or less abnormal growths of flesh about eyes and over nostrils
- carriage* — general bearing of pigeon
- chain* — fore-part of frill, as in Jacobins
- checkered* — having wing feathers with irregularly colored tips. Black-checkered feathers are black tipped with blue; blue-checkered feathers are blue tipped with black; etc.
- chuck* — white patch below under-mandible, as in Beards
- clean-legged* — having no feathers on shanks or feet
- close-feathered* — having feathers lying flat against body; not loose-feathered; same as "tight-feathered"
- cobby* — English equivalent for American "blocky"; heavily, solidly built, more or less round in form
- cock* — male pigeon
- comparison judging* — appraising show specimens without score-card by merely comparing one with another
- condition* (noun) — quality of pigeon as regards state of health and of plumage
- condition* (verb) — to wash, tame, train, or otherwise prepare a pigeon for show room
- cream* — yellowish-white
- crest* — feather tuft at back-skull. If it extends across the head, it is called "shell-crest"; if it terminates in a point, then it is called "pin-crest."
- crop* — pouchlike enlargement of gullet, in which food is stored and softened before it is passed into gizzard
- cushion* — excessive quantity of soft feathers about tail
- deep-bodied* — having noticeable depth of body from top of back to lower side of breastbone
- dewlap* — growth of loose skin below the beak
- dominant* — traits or characteristics which predominate in breeding
- double-lacing* — penciling of outer edge of feather, as in Oriental Frills
- dove* — any specimen of the smaller species of pigeons
- down-faced* — having full frontal and sloping beak, as in Owls
- faking* — using unfair means to put pigeons in show condition, as removing or dyeing objectionable feathers, and similar practices
- family* — strain
- fancy* (noun) — a number of fanciers, collectively
- feeders* — pigeons used as foster parents to raise the young of the short-beaked varieties
- flight-coverts* — short feathers growing at the base of the flight feathers, which they cover in part

- flights* or *flight feathers*—primary feathers on wings  
*fluff*—down part of feather; also, profuse soft feathering about thighs and abdomen  
*foreign color*—color not belonging to variety according to standard  
*foul feathers*—feathers of a color not belonging to variety  
*frill*—fluffed feathers on throat, as in Oriental Frills and Turbits  
*frog-headed*—having depression between eyes over crown of skull, as in Turbits  
*Gazzi*—Modenas having white bodies, but colored heads, wings, and tails  
*globe*—air-filled, circular throat, as in Pouters  
*grizzle*—mixture of blue and white in a sort of “salt and pepper” effect, especially around the head and the neck  
*hackle*—long, flowing feathers growing on neck of pigeons; there is a family of hackled pigeons to which the Nicobar belongs.  
*handkerchief*—mottling of white feathers on scapular plumage of such varieties as Mottled Tumblers  
*hen*—female pigeon  
*hock*—joint between thigh and shank  
*homing*—faculty of returning to home loft over territory, which is at least in part new or strange to flyer  
*hood*—inverted feathers on neck, as in Jacobin  
*I.F.A.H.P.F.*—International Federation of American Homing Pigeon Fanciers  
*inbreeding*—mating closely related birds to each other, as father to daughter, brother to sister, etc.  
*keel*—lower edge of breastbone  
*kit*—a number of pigeons, such as Rollers or Tipplers, trained to fly together  
*lacing*—marginal edging of a feather; usually darker than the body of the feather  
*larking*—triangular brown or black patches on wings, as in Coburg and Nuremberg Larks  
*leggy*—having legs too long  
*line breeding*—modified inbreeding from a certain number of birds not too closely related, such as mating daughter to father or son to mother, according to a definite plan  
*Magnani*—Modenas whose plumage has a dappled or spangled effect, by virtue of a mixture of several colors  
*mandibles*—horny, upper and lower portions of beak or bill  
*mane*—rear part of Jacobin's frill  
*markings*—lacing, barring, striping, or any other kind of marks on plumage  
*mealy*—powdery silver with red bars; color of meal

- mottled*—having small, crescent-shaped patches of white on a ground plumage of a single or "self" color  
*muff*—growth of feathers on shanks or toes  
*N.P.A.*—National Pigeon Association  
*O.C.*—old cock  
*O.H.*—old hen  
*outcross*—using a pigeon of a different strain for breeding purposes  
*peeper*—squab ready to leave the nest  
*pied* (adj.)—having one color splashed with patches of feathers of a different color; applied particularly to colored birds with patches of white  
*pigeon fly*—sometimes called "tick fly"; a highly specialized fly living on pigeons  
*pigeon milk*—soft, white substance secreted by crop and fed to newly hatched squabs for some days  
*pinch-eyed*—having slight narrowness at rear part of otherwise round eye-cere of Dragoon  
*pin-crest*—see *crest*  
*primaries*—flight feathers  
*racy*—applied to a slender, trim, tight-feathered bird of alert carriage  
*roach back*—hump-back  
*rose*—center of the rosette forming the frill of the Jacobin; white feathers appearing on the shoulders of certain varieties, such as Pouters, in the shape of a rose; a compact group of feathers, the size of a half-dollar piece, radiating from the center of the skull, as in Trumpeters  
*rose-wing*—having several white feathers near the center of each wing; applied only to solidly colored birds  
*Ruff*—a name for the Jacobin  
*saddle*—that portion of the back extending between the transverse median line of the back and the base of the tail  
*scaly leg*—mite-disease of the shanks and feet  
*Schietti*—applied to Modenas, meaning colored all over, regardless of kind of color. Classification includes white self-colored  
*secondaries*—the long quill feathers of the wings, growing next to and above the primaries  
*self-color*—any uniform or solid color  
*shank*—that portion of the leg between the toes and the hock joint  
*sheath*—the covering of a new feather. It splits and falls off as the feather develops.  
*shell-crest*—see *crest*  
*shoeing*—the feathers below the main tail feathers; especially noticeable in Fantails

- short-faced*—having very short beak and frontal, as in Turbits and Owls
- shoulder*—front, or upper part of the wing
- shoulder-butt*—the same as the shoulder
- silver*—very delicate shade of blue with a little cream
- single color*—the same as whole color
- slipped wing*—a wing with twisted or improperly folding secondaries
- smooth-legged*—having legs without feathers, stubs, or down on the shanks
- smut*—dark coloring superimposed on some other and usually standard color
- snip*—patch of white or colored feathers above beak
- solid color*—one color throughout
- spangled*—dark marking at the tip of a feather
- spindle-beak*—thin or pointed beak
- splashed*—having uneven markings (color and white); sometimes called stippled
- split-eyed*—having the iris partly black and partly bright-colored
- sport*—sudden spontaneous variation from type or breed; a mutation
- squeaker*—squab ready to leave the nest; especially applied to young racing homers
- stippled*—see *splashed*
- stock birds*—pigeons withdrawn from racing and from showing and used solely for breeding. Often they have some fault.
- stockings*—short feathers covering the lower joint and claws of such varieties as the frillbacks and the Ancients
- stop*—an indentation causing an angular appearance between a projecting beak and a rising forehead; as in the short-faced Tumbler
- strain*—birds of one variety bred in line for a definite purpose for five or more generations from a certain number of foundation birds; sometimes called *family*.
- stud*—collection of pure-bred birds
- team*—four pigeons on exhibition: a pair of old birds and a pair of youngsters
- thighs*—upper segment of the leg
- throat*—same as gullet
- ticked*—having plumage with spots of color different from that of the remainder of the plumage
- tight-feathered*—see *close-feathered*
- toy*—small pigeon bred only for markings, such as the Ice or the Crescent

*trap*—bob-wire door through which pigeon can enter but not leave loft

*trimming*—preparation of pigeons for exhibition usually considered unethical

*tucked up*—applied to wings held up nicely; not drooping

*type*—form or carriage peculiar to a certain variety

*utility*—bred for squab production, not fancy or exhibition purposes

*whiskered*—smooth continuation of reversed frill feathering, beginning at breast and running to sides of head

*wing-bar*—a broad stripe of color usually different from that of the remainder of the plumage, running across the wings

*wing-butts*—ends of flight feathers; misnomer for wing-points

*wing-coverts*—feathers covering the roots of the secondary flight feathers

Y.C.—young cock

Y.H.—young hen

## Pigeon Literature

The following bibliography comprises a selected number of representative works in English, German, and French, which deal with various phases of pigeon-keeping. In the main they are books and periodicals which the author has found helpful and interesting in the furtherance of his hobby. To list all available books and pamphlets on the subject of pigeons, most of which are out of print and not to be had in any public library, would only be confusing.

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